EXPLORING STIGMA, IDENTITY GAPS, AND CONSUMPTION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

A stigma "refers to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman 1963, 3). The stigmatized characteristic or trait labels the possessor as different from what is considered "normal" in some way. More specifically, in order for stigmatization to occur, the attribute in question must be connected with one or more negative stereotypes (Jones et al. 1984). Because stigma has often been an outcome rather than the basis of research in consumer behavior, researchers need to attain a better understanding of how stigmatization and consumption interact. A more in-depth analysis is needed to explore both how consumption creates and perpetuates stereotypes, as well as how people utilize it to manage stigma. This dissertation explores the complex interrelationships among stigma, identity, and consumption.

Stigma negatively affects how possessors of an undesirable trait are viewed by those around them and by society; as such, it exerts significant influence over people's identity. Simply put, stigmatization affects not only how individuals perceive themselves, but also how they feel others perceive them; or will perceive them, if their stigma is discovered (Crocker, Major, and Steele 1998). Individuals may face stigmatization of physical, mental, behavioral, or social characteristics. Common stigmatized attributes include race, class, gender, religion, and consumption decisions (e.g., being a Goth). Research finds that stigmatization can significantly affect individuals' physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and social well-being.

In this dissertation, I explore African-American women's lived experiences with stigmatization. Specifically, I explore how the interaction of race and gender affect stigmatization, how stigmatization affects identity, and how individuals manage multiple

stigmas. I examine how stigmatization can create identity gaps as well as how these women manage the identity conflicts. It is important for consumer behavior scholars to understand how consumption can exacerbate and even contribute to the creation of stereotypes as these effects can lead to significant consumer welfare implications. Furthermore, in studying how stigmatization affects identity, I offer a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals can use consumption to manage their stigma and the identities they project to those around them.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> I hate on the news when they interview someone, like an African-American woman. It seems like there could be ten professional women walking down the street and they find the one that has the hair rollers, house coat and house shoes, [who] can't put two sentences together that are grammatically correct. I mean, I hate seeing African-Americans portrayed that way, women portrayed that way... [like] we don't have the intellect to move beyond [the stereotype]. It has kind of driven me to really want to put my best foot forward when it comes to being in the professional setting, or any setting. It doesn't mean that I am trying to be fake or phony, but you can be yourself but still be intelligent and not you know, be on welfare. Not that there is anything wrong with that, if people actually need it, but that's the stereotype of the majority of black women. I think it is important to really show the other side. (Janet)

A stigma "refers to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman 1963, 3). The stigmatized characteristic or trait labels the possessor as different from what is considered "normal" in some way. More specifically, in order for stigmatization to occur, the attribute in question must be connected with one or more negative stereotypes (Jones et al. 1984). Janet's statement above reveals the intertwining of stigmatization, identity, and consumption. She believes that society ascribes a particular identity to her and expects her to make certain consumption choices because of her race and gender. In the quote, Janet describes making very deliberate decisions in order to combat these

stereotypes. Because stigma has often been an outcome rather than the basis of research in consumer behavior, researchers need to attain a better understanding of how stigmatization and consumption interact. A more in-depth analysis is needed to explore both how consumption creates and perpetuates stereotypes, as well as how people utilize it to manage stigma. This dissertation explores the complex interrelationships among stigma, identity, and consumption.

Stigma negatively affects how possessors of an undesirable trait are viewed by those around them and by society; as such, it exerts significant influence over people's identity. Simply put, stigmatization affects not only how individuals perceive themselves, but also how they feel others perceive them; or will perceive them, if their stigma is discovered (Crocker, Major, and Steele 1998). Moreover, stigmas are socially constructed; that is, whether a particular attribute is considered a stigma depends on the environmental and situational factors that are salient in a given context. Crocker et al. (1998) argue that "stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context" (505). Individuals may face stigmatization of physical, mental, behavioral, or social characteristics. Common stigmatized attributes include race, class, gender, religion, and consumption decisions (e.g., being a Goth). Research finds that stigmatization can significantly affect individuals' physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and social well-being. For example, many stigmatized individuals suffer from low self-worth and depression (Abramson, Metalsky, and Alloy 1989) or increased stress levels (Allison 1998). These individuals may also face discrimination in many areas of their daily lives, including education, healthcare, employment, and the marketplace.

In this dissertation, I explore African-American women's lived experiences with stigmatization. While both African-Americans and women are stigmatized by society, African-American women face significantly more stigmatization than their Caucasian female counterparts or even African-American males (Collins 2000). They are stigmatized by both their race and their gender. Moreover, Black feminist scholars argue that too often, researchers define African-American women primarily by their race, while other attributes like gender are ignored (i.e. Collins 2000; Terhune 2008). Yet, these women are not just African-Americans, they are also *women*. In other words, in order to fully understand the interplay between African-American women's identity and stigmatization, scholars must examine how race and gender are interrelated, and how these relationships affect the women's control over their everyday lives.

While stigma has emerged as an important construct in consumer behavior (e.g., Adkins and Ozanne 2005; Kozinets 2001; Tepper 1994; Viswanathan, Rosa, and Harris 2005), it has typically been relegated to the background of research studies. This dissertation brings the construct to the forefront by exploring the interrelationships among stigma, identity, and consumption. Specifically, I explore how the interaction of race and gender affect stigmatization, how stigmatization affects identity, and how individuals manage multiple stigmas. It is important for consumer behavior scholars to understand how consumption can exacerbate and even contribute to the creation of stereotypes as these effects can lead to significant consumer welfare implications. Furthermore, in studying how stigmatization affects identity, I offer a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals can use consumption to manage their stigma and the identities they project to those around them. In the following section, I

discuss my theoretical template and context, before stating my research questions. I detail my methodology in a subsequent section before I outline my contributions. The last section offers a brief overview of the dissertation.

THEORETICAL TEMPLATE: INTERSECTIONALITY

Conceptualizing Intersectionality

Phenomena such as race, class, and gender are socially constructed and historically situated (De Reus et al. 2005; Espiritu 1992; Omi and Winant 1994). As such, the stereotypes associated with these types of attributes are generally considered to be fluid and constantly evolving. Furthermore, Zinn and Dill (1996) argue that "race, class, gender, and sexuality are not reducible to individual attributes to be measured and assessed for their separate contributions in explaining given social outcomes" (329). Intersectionality is based on the tenet that these attributes cannot exist independently of each other, but rather are intertwined and mutually constructive. For example, in this dissertation I explore how stigma affects African-American women. In order to accomplish this task, I cannot simply examine race and gender separately; I must study how the two attributes interact and co-exist. This dynamic interaction creates a unique experience with stigma and stigma management for these women. To fully explore African-American women's lived experiences and to understand how they manage these multiple stigmas, I need to study not what it means to be African-American or what it means to be a woman, but what it means to be an African-American woman.

The term intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), a law scholar, to help illustrate the lack of objectivity in the United States judicial system. For example, on average an individual convicted of raping a Caucasian woman is sentenced to ten years in prison, while someone convicted of raping an African-American woman is sentenced to approximately two years in prison (Crenshaw 1989). Moreover, African-American women are more susceptible to stigmatization due to marginalization based on both their race *and* their gender. The interaction of these culturally grounded attributes contributes to the systematic marginalization and discrimination rampant in society.

Since its inception, the concept of intersectionality has moved beyond legal studies to become a tenet in numerous other social science disciplines, particularly in sociology, gender studies, and critical race studies. It has often been used to gain a better understanding of those people who are on the margins of society and who lack the power to make their voices heard. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) argues that intersectionality allows researchers and legal professionals to address the plight and injustice that African-American women confront in their everyday lives. Oftentimes, these women fall through the cracks of society. Intersectionality theory attempts to eliminate these cracks by determining how attributes such as race and gender affect African-American women.

Crenshaw (1994) further states that "when we don't pay attention to the margins, when we don't acknowledge the intersection, where the places of power overlap, we not only fail to see the women who fall between our movements, [but] sometimes we pit our movements against each other" (118). Crenshaw argues that the consequences of disregarding these intersections are twofold. First, as previously discussed, without

intersectionality in their consideration sets, researchers often fail to recognize those individuals who exist at point of intersection and who face considerable marginalization. Scholarship consistently shows that utilizing intersectionality offers researchers a unique window into the lives of these individuals (e.g., Collins 2000; Espiritu 1992; Omi and Winant 1994; Terhune 2008). Second, Crenshaw asserts that if scholars and activists continue to ignore these intersections, they run the risk of working against each other. For example, while the Women's Movement concentrated heavily on women's rights, the Civil Rights Movement primarily focused on racial equality. African-American women obviously hold a stake in both of these efforts. If intersectionality is ignored, scholars and activists of these distinct movements may detract from each other and even work counterproductively. Rather than risking these consequences, the campaigns should embrace those who represent the intersection of these characteristics and work together.

Criticisms of Intersectionality

There are several major criticisms of intersectionality. First, ambiguity exists within the various definitions of intersectionality (Shirley 2009). While most definitions offer examples of attributes that may be important to consider (e.g., race and gender), conceptualizations of the theoretical framework do not provide strict guidelines about what types of attributes should or should not be considered important. Thus, the seemingly limitless scope of the paradigm is problematic.

Additionally, there is not a clearly defined methodological process associated with the theoretical framework (Nash 2008). Much of the research on intersectionality utilizes qualitative methods (e.g., Davis 2008; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008; Shields 2008); however, several scholars have recently attempted to measure the intersectionality

of identities, with some success (e.g., Jaramillo 2010; Stirratt et al. 2008). Unfortunately even within these studies the methodological ambiguities surrounding intersectionality persist. Related to these concerns, there has been considerable debate over which groups deserve the most attention by researchers. Much of the research using intersectionality theory utilizes African-American women as a context (Nash 2008). While they clearly are a legitimate topic of study (and especially relevant to intersectionality theory), recently scholars have called for research on other intersections. This development raises the question of what attribute categories should be studied. In short, scholars must consider whether particular categories are more important than others.

Unfortunately, intersectionality is largely ignored in consumer research. Gopaldas and Fischer (in press) argue that while intersectionality is implicit in some studies (e.g., Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Fischer and Arnold 1990), consumer research scholars should more fully embrace the concept, as it offers the potential for generating richer research. The authors also suggest future opportunities for work on intersectionality in consumer behavior, such as to study unresearched marginalized groups. I will discuss these opportunities in depth in my contributions section of this chapter.

Research Context: African-American Women

As discussed above, since intersectionality theory was first introduced, many scholars have focused their studies on one particular intersection: that of race and gender. Noted sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argues that African-American women are oppressed by the external definition created by society of what it means to be a member of that cohort. The identity that society ascribes to these women is based on stereotypes. African-American women habitually face high levels of discrimination, marginalization,

sexism, and racism. For example, Combs (2003) finds that in academia, this group often faces discrimination in the promotion and tenure process. These women also frequently feel isolated and disengaged from the academic community.

African-American women's experiences as consumers have been neglected by consumer research scholars. Overall, very few studies focus on the experiences of African-American consumers, not counting studies where this cohort makes up part of experimental pools (e.g., Brumbaugh 2009; Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Lamot and Molnar 2001). African-American *women* are virtually ignored by consumer researchers, despite the fact that they make up more than 6.5% of the United States population, or over 20 million people (U.S. Census 2010). Furthermore, these women are facing considerable economic hardship. The unemployment rate for African-American women was 13.4% in August 2011 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). Moreover, the median household income for African-Americans is $32,068, more than $20,000 less than White households (U.S. Census 2011). With limited resources, these women's consumption decisions are critical to their well-being as they attempt to navigate racial and gender stigmatization.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation explores African-American women's experiences with multiple stigmas. More specifically, I address the following research questions:

1. What stereotypes do African-American women face due to race and gender stigmas?

2. How do informants perceive that consumption contributes to the development or continuation of these stereotypes?
3. How do these stereotypes affect African-American women's identities?
4. How do African-American women manage race and gender stigmas?
5. Specifically, how do African-American women use consumption to manage these stereotypes?

METHODOLOGY

I employ two qualitative data collection methods to tap into African-American women's experiences of living with multiple stigmas. First, I conducted 23 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. In conjunction with these interviews, informants also constructed collages depicting their identities as African-American women. Collages are employed in a wide variety of disciplines to allow informants to use visual images they select from magazines, newspapers, and other sources to facilitate discussion (Coulter et al. 2001). The selection of these images allows informants greater control over the data collection process and reveals the constructs and concepts they find the most relevant to their own experiences. All informants live in a small city in the Midwest (population approximately 100,000). They come from a wide variety of social class backgrounds (e.g., lower working class to upper middle class) and are between the ages of 19 and 56 (See Table 3.1 in Chapter 3 for informant biographies). All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, yielding more than 650 pages of text.

Throughout the data analysis process, I adhered to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) tenets of constructing grounded theory. In contrast to the principles of quantitative research, the grounded theory perspective argues that rather than enter a study with hypotheses, researchers should develop analytic codes and categories from the data. In analyzing both the collages and the written text from the in-depth interviews, I searched for emergent themes while also engaging in dialectical tacking (Strauss and Corbin 1998). I discuss my data collection and analytical methods in greater detail in Chapter 3.

CONTRIBUTIONS

My findings offer significant theoretical implications. First, I explore the stereotype categories that African-American women face, which range from beauty to sexual stereotypes. I show how consumption can create and perpetuate these stereotypes. In particular, I demonstrate how informants believe the media and advertising influence these processes. Furthermore, I explore how stereotypes affect African-American women's service encounters in both retail and food service contexts.

The dissertation also explores how race and gender stigmatization affects African-American women's identity. I show how stereotypes can create a contradiction between who these women feel they truly are and how society views them. This conflict creates what Hecht (1993) and Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau (1993) term an identity gap between the personal and communal frames of identity. I also expand upon the identity gaps identified in the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993) and extend their relevance to consumer research. Specifically, while previous research

explores the concept of inter-frame identity gaps, I discover the existence of *intra*-frame gaps. In this identity gap category, African-American women confront conflicting stereotypes from society and the African-American community. This causes an identity gap within the communal frame.

I also offer an emergent holistic, theoretical model detailing how African-American women manage stigma and their identity through the manipulation of the different aspects of identity. I also outline how African-American women use consumption to manage identity gaps. In unpacking these management strategies, I discuss the internal or external orientation of the different components of identity as well as the agency that an individual holds over each individual frame. I also act upon Gopaldas and Fischer's (in press) encouragement for researchers to move beyond studying how consumption reproduces identity, and explore how consumption can transform identity. Specifically, I examine how some African-American women use consumption to transcend race and gender stereotypes.

Utilizing the concept of intersectionality adds an extra dimension of theoretical richness. First, in step with Gopaldas and Fischer's (in press) suggestions, I explore an overlooked intersection in consumer research. As discussed above, as is the case for most minorities, African-Americans in general have been largely ignored in consumer research, with African-American *women* even further marginalized. Gopaldas and Fischer (in press) caution that while "researchers may have no difficulty finding overlooked intersections… they may have difficulty legitimating why these intersections matter theoretically" (n.p.). However, my results show that in addition to context-specific

findings, this group offers new insights into identity formation as well as stigma and stigma management.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 contains an overview of the identity literature in consumer behavior, including an analysis of the state of the field. I also discuss the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993) as well as the concept of identity gaps, which emerged as a salient theory during my review of the literature for this dissertation. Additionally, the chapter includes a review of the research on stigma, both in the social sciences and in consumer research. In the following chapter, I outline my data collection and analysis processes. In chapter 4, I discuss my interpretation and major findings. The final chapter includes a discussion of the findings as well as the contributions. It also contains the limitations of this dissertation and future research avenues to explore.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the relevant literature for the research presented in this dissertation, both in consumer behavior and other disciplines. The following section provides an overview of the identity literature and introduces the Communication Theory of Identity. It also discusses the state of the scholarship on identity in the field of consumer research. The latter part of the chapter offers a broad examination of stigma, from its conceptualization by researchers to the ways individuals manage it. The first section on stigma defines the construct and differentiates it from other, similar terms. Subsequent sections explore the ramifications of stigma, how stigma is studied using different methodologies, how people manage stigmatization, and the concept of stigma in consumer research.

IDENTITY THEORY

Research on the construct of identity is prevalent across social science disciplines. The concept is complex and multidimensional. Horowitz (1975) argues that identity "embraces multiple levels or tiers, and it changes with the environment" (119). Identity formation is a fluid, constantly evolving process (Kellner 1992). Moreover, identity is, at least in part, contextually bound. Given the multifaceted nature of identity, it is unsurprising that researchers study the construct from a variety of perspectives, including individual, relational, and communal standpoints. While each offers insights into identity, no single perspective presents a comprehensive picture of the mechanics of the concept. To remedy this oversight, Hecht (1993) and Hecht et al. (1993) advance the

Communication Theory of Identity, which integrates the different levels of analysis to better understand the mechanisms behind identity and identity formation. In this section, I discuss the development of the Communication Theory of Identity as well as the different frames of identity associated with the theory. In addition, I explore the relationship between the theory and stigma.

Development of the Communication Theory of Identity

Hecht (1993) and Hecht et al. (1993) argue that the individual, social, and communal aspects of identity are interrelated and mutually construct each other. The researchers go on to note that identity is enduring and yet constantly evolving, meaning that while identity is continually changing, it is also historically grounded. In other words, an individual's past identity facilitates the formation of his or her current self.

The Communication Theory of Identity is derived from Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory (Hecht et al. 1993). Social Identity Theory is based on the concept of social categorization and argues that people's identities are formulated through societal-level categories, including ethnicity, race, gender, and political affiliation (Turner et al. 1987). Individuals fit into various social categories, which significantly influence the formation of their sense of self (Hogg 1993; Hogg and Abrams 1988). These categories are internalized by individuals, who integrate the social group memberships into their identity. The internalization and integration in turn affects their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. Placement into a particular social group can be voluntary or involuntary. For example, while individuals choose their own political affiliation, society ascribes other group memberships, such as ethnicity. While Social Identity

Theory provides a methodical exploration of the societal aspects of identity construction, the theory does not consider micro-level attributes, such as individual social roles.

Conversely, Identity Theory is built on the concept that people possess and express multiple roles across different social contexts (as first explicated by Mead 1934). Individuals maintain a hierarchy of selves, where the various levels are each associated with different roles that they play. Roles are defined as "the functions or parts a person performs when occupying a particular position within a particular social context" (Schlenker 1985, 18). In other words, different roles are salient at certain points in time, based on the situational context and the importance of the role to the individual. These roles are internalized and comprise a person's sense of self. As such, they provide a pattern of social behavior that is appropriate within a certain situational context (Banton 1965).

Identity Theory focuses on the interaction of social roles in more contained networks, such as the family or workplace, rather than larger, societal group categories such as ethnic groups or social classes (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; Stets and Burke 2000). Thus, by focusing on these effects, Identity Theory overlooks important communal level influences. Furthermore, while identity formation research centering on social roles recognizes that identity is relational, it largely ignores how identity is communicated through these roles (Hecht et al. 1993). However, identity is inherently a communicative process; that is, an individual's sense of self is formed and shared through communication (Collier and Thomas 1988).

Hecht (1993) and Hecht et al. (1993) argue that both the individual and society, as well as communication, play a significant role in identity development. The

Communication Theory of Identity is developed on the premise that there are four frames, or loci, of identity: (1) personal, (2) enacted, (3) relational, and (4) communal (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993). These four frames do not exist separately from each other; rather, they are intertwined. Hecht et al. (1993) and Hecht (1993) contend that scholars will glean richer results by exploring multiple frames of identity, and their interrelationships, instead of concentrating on only one level of identity, or by assuming that each identity frame exists in a vacuum. I will discuss each of these frames in turn.

Personal identity frame. The personal identity frame focuses on how individuals define themselves. This definition includes people's "self-cognitions, feelings about self, and/or a spiritual sense of self-being… and provides understanding of how individuals define themselves in general as well as in particular situations" (Hecht 1993, 79). The personal identity frame includes people's self-concept and self-image.

Enacted identity frame. The enacted identity frame pertains to how individuals express their identity to themselves and others (Hecht et al. 1993). The Communication Theory of Identity argues that identity "is formed, maintained, and modified in a communicative process and thus reflects communication" (Hecht et al. 2005, 262). People experience identity through communication, meaning that identity is often framed in terms of enactments or how they express their identity to those around them. Hecht et al. (2005) argue that while not all communications are about identity, identity is a part of all communications.

Closely related to this concept is Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model of the presentation of self, which is integrated into the Communication Theory of Identity. Goffman (1959) uses a dramaturgical metaphor to discuss social roles and identity.

Individuals play many different roles in the course of their everyday lives, and within these roles they exhibit both front stage and backstage behavior. Front stage behavior is the enactment of social identity based on these roles. While individuals may exert some control over what roles they perform, personal or situational contexts often limit the flexibility to choose which roles to enact. For example, an individual cannot choose all of the social categories with which he or she is associated. While people can select their political affiliation and to a certain extent their profession, significant for this dissertation is that they cannot select their race or gender.

Relational identity frame. The relational identity frame consists of three components. The first relates to individuals' perception of how others view them. This identity frame echoes Cooley's (1902) concept of the looking-glass self, which is closely related to Identity Theory. Second, individuals define themselves based on those around them. Their identity, behavior, and sense of self are significantly affected and shaped by their interactions with other people, and in particular, their social relationships. For example, their identity may be partially based on their relationship with their parents. Lastly, relationships can develop identities of their own (Montgomery 1992). Hecht (1993) illustrates this concept with the dating couple, which shares an identity as a unit.

Communal identity frame. People's identities are also developed through the communal frame, where identity is formed through group membership, rather than individual or social interaction. In contrast to the previous three identity frames, the communal identity frame "locates identity in the group… [T]hese communities define a repertoire of identities that are jointly held" (Hecht 1993, 80). In this frame, society ascribes a collective identity based on group membership and the expectation of shared

characteristics and collective memories. For example, Republicans are expected to advocate for the right to bear arms, while Democrats are often perceived to be animal rights activists.

Witteborn (2004) argues that stigmas are the result of communal discourse. In other words, stigmas are formed based on public opinion due to how society as a whole communicates its feelings about a particular attribute. In her research, Witteborn (2004) notes that after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Americans ascribed the terrorist identity to those of Arab or Middle Eastern descent. Most were viewed as Muslim extremists who were a danger to American citizens. Witteborn's informants were assigned this particular identity based on their ethnicity, regardless of whether it actually fit with their other identity frames. The media often plays a significant role in communal discourse. For example, Harper (2005) finds that media messages and portrayals encourage and reinforce the stereotype that mentally ill individuals are unpredictable, violent, and dangerous. I will discuss the relationship between the Communication Theory of Identity and stigma in more depth later in this review.

Identity Gap Theory

Hecht et al. (1993) extend the tenets of the Communication Theory of Identity and introduce the concept of identity gaps. The four frames of identity can by studied independently from each other; however, these frames are interrelated and continuously mutually construct each other (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993). The identities associated with each particular frame are therefore relevant to each other. Furthermore, one or more frames may contradict or mutually exclude the others. Because different discourses govern the norms and expectations of the different identity frames, discrepancies among

the frames can occur, which can result in an identity gap (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993; Jung and Hecht 2004). Hecht (1993) and Hecht et al. (1993) identify 11 potential identity gaps (six between any two frames, four among any three, and one among all four). These are depicted in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1: Potential Identity Gaps as Identified by Hecht (1993) and Hecht et al. (1993)

Two Frame Gap	Three Frame Gap	Four Frame Gap
Personal-Enacted	Personal-Enacted-Relational	Personal-Enacted-Relational-Communal
Personal-Relational	Personal-Enacted-Communal	
Personal-Communal	Personal- Relational-Communal	
Enacted-Relational	Enacted-Relational-Communal	
Enacted-Communal		
Relational-Communal		

For example, one identity gap is the personal-enacted gap, which captures how the ways individuals subjectively view themselves may differ from how they present themselves to those around them. It is important to note that not all identity gaps have been studied; this fact is due in part to the relative newness of the concept. Typically, research focuses on

one or two specific identity gaps (i.e. Jung and Hecht 2004; Witteborn 2004). In addition, much of the research surrounding identity gaps has been conducted on gaps that include enacted identity—a finding that is somewhat expected, given that most of the research on identity gap theory resides in the communication literature.

Furthermore, much of the research involving identity gap theory is primarily descriptive, with little theoretical advancement. For example, Orbe (2004) uses identity gaps to describe how first-generation college students negotiate their enacted and relational identities in opposition to their personal identity. In another study, Henson and Olson (2010) use the theory to describe how serial killers often disassociate themselves from their crimes and refuse to take responsibility for their crimes.

However, some research on identity gaps does attempt to advance the theory. For example, Jung and Hecht (2004) develop a scale that measures personal-relational and personal-enacted identity gaps. They find that both are associated with decreased communication effectiveness. These gaps can lead to individuals feeling misunderstood and lessen their satisfaction with how they communicate their identity to others (Jung and Hecht 2004). Furthermore, research shows that identity gaps can lead to increased feelings of depression (Jung and Hecht 2008). Identity gaps can also engender feelings of perceived discrimination (Wadsworth, Hecht, and Jung 2008).

Additionally, gaps involving the relational identity frame often decrease relationship communication effectiveness through topic avoidance (Kam and Hecht 2009). In other words, if an identity gap entails the relational identity frame, an individual may attempt to not draw attention to the gap by avoiding discussion of it. This avoidance strategy leads to decreased communication effectiveness. People also suffer from

deteriorating social relationships because of a disconnect between their identity frames. Overall, individuals report that relational identity gaps result in decreased relationship satisfaction.

Communication Theory of Identity and Stigmatization

Stigmatized attributes often fall into the communal frame of identity because stigmas are often associated with group memberships such as race or ethnicity. Simply put, the identity society ascribes to a given group often contains certain stereotypes associated with that social category. Stigmatized individuals may internalize these stereotypes and absorb them into their identity, an act that may result in negative emotions such as shame (Cottle 1994). In such cases, the stereotyped person can strengthen the influence of the stigma by embodying it and thereby giving it legitimacy. This process is known as "stereotype threat" (Steele and Aronson 1995). In essence, communal and personal identity frames mutually reinforce the stereotype. Jung and Hecht (2004) find that the stereotype may also permeate the enacted identity frame, as the personal and communal acceptance of the stigma will influence how the individual communicates his or her identity.

Conversely, individuals can reject the communal identity ascribed to them, perpetuating a personal-communal identity gap. Individuals may completely reject the communal identity for all who share the same communal identity, or they may reject it only for themselves while applying it to others in the social category. For example, Thompson and Seibold (1978) find that people with HIV/AIDS often do not view themselves as promiscuous, but feel that this term aptly describes others with the condition. Similarly, Juhila (2004) notes that while homeless-shelter residents do not

view themselves as lazy, they frequently feel the other people in the shelter embody this stereotype.

CONSUMER RESEARCH AND IDENTITY

As previously noted, a wide range of social science disciplines study the construct of identity; the field of consumer research is no exception. Much of the research on identity in consumer behavior can be traced back to work by McCracken (1986) and Belk (1988). McCracken (1986) argues that consumer goods hold value beyond their utilitarian function and that products can be used to express cultural meanings. Belk (1988) expands McCracken's (1986) work in exploring how individuals use possessions to communicate and shape their identities.

With this work as a backbone, a profusion of identity research has been produced by consumer behavior scholars. The majority fits into one of four categories: (1) cultural/anthropological, (2) sociological, (3) family/other subcultures (a subcategory of the sociological category), and (4) individual. The cultural/anthropological category consists of research that explores how culture affects identity. This area includes articles on how cultural identity affects other constructs such as negotiation (e.g., Graham et al. 1988) and brands (e.g., Dong and Tian 2009). This category also includes a plethora of research on acculturation (e.g., Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Mehta and Belk 1991). The sociological research examines the interrelationships between identity and broad sociological constructs such as social class (e.g., Henry 2005), gender (e.g., Fisher and Arnold 1990; Tuncay 2006), and sexual orientation (e.g., Kates 2002). The

third category encompasses research on group identity, such as family (e.g., Epp and Price 2008) or other subcultures (e.g., Kozinets 2001). The fourth category explores how individual identity factors, such as need for uniqueness, affect consumption (e.g., Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). I will discuss each of these categories in more depth below.

Cultural/Anthropological Identity Research

Cultural factors play a key role in identity formation, and this significance is recognized both explicitly and implicitly in consumer research.

Explicit cultural identity research. Graham et al. (1988) argue that cultural identity affects buyer-seller negotiations during exchange processes. For example, when Americans negotiate, they favor problem-solving bargaining strategies. However, when Chinese consumers negotiate, competitive strategies are often more effective. In this case, cultural identity manifests through these various negotiation practices.

Much of the research in the cultural category focuses on acculturation. Cultural identity can be fluid, changing continuously as the immigrant comes into contact with new situations (Kellner 1992). Identity formation during acculturation is a "dialogical process that involves a constant moving back and forth between incompatible cultural positions" (Bhatia 2002, 61). Moreover, through the negotiation of two different cultures, immigrants may adapt their cultural identity. As immigration causes identity to become unstable, the role of products in stabilizing identity and reaffirming cultural connections increases (Mehta and Belk 1991). For example, Thompson and Tambyah (1999) find that expatriates use consumption to negotiate cultural differences and form identities to function in the dominant culture, often using hobbies to meet people and develop social networks.

Immigrants can use consumption to create multiple identities (Lindridge, Hogg, and Shah 2004). In turn, these identities assist immigrants in negotiating both their culture of origin and the dominant culture simultaneously. Cultural identity can change depending on how the individual identifies with the situation (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Jamal and Chapman 2000; Oswald 1999). In certain situations, immigrants will choose to consume products that reflect their previous cultural identity, while at other times they will consume products that represent their new culture. Oswald (1999) finds that Haitian immigrants in the United States continuously engage in "culture swapping," the process of allowing one culture to dominate depending on the situational context. In her study, the main informant cooks traditional American meat and vegetables for the children in her daycare, but cooks traditional Haitian dishes for her family. Similarly, South Asian immigrants in Britain engage in this kind of culture swapping in their choice of clothing depending on the situation (Lindridge et al. 2004).

Furthermore, immigration can cause cultural identity to become ambiguous as the familiar culture is left behind (Levy-Warren 1987; Maldonada and Tansuhaj 1998). Askegaard and Arnould (1999) find that consumption is the "domain through which immigrants seek to hold onto certain patterns of culture and identity perceived to link them to their culture of origin" (335). In other words, people can use consumption to reinforce the identity that connects them to their original culture. However, immigrants may stay connected to their original culture by separating from the new dominant culture as well. Hwang and He (1999) find Chinese immigrants in the United States attempt to preserve their cultural identity in part by consuming Chinese media such as Chinese television programming and newspapers. This separation can evolve into what Askegaard

et al. (2005) term “hyperculture,” which occurs when aspects of the culture of origin become more important after immigration.

Implicit cultural identity research. Identity cultural factors are also implicit in much of consumer research, including cross-cultural research that examines collectivism and individualism (e.g., Han and Shavitt 1994). The construct of collectivism captures the belief that the well-being of the society is valued over that of the individual. It emphasizes the interdependence of those within the culture. In contrast, individualism values the well-being of the individual over that of the group as a whole. Individualism places importance on self-reliance and independence. Scholars consistently find that Eastern cultures tend to be more collectivist in nature while Western society is more individualistic. This fundamental cultural difference affects consumers' identities, and in turn how and what they consume.

Sociological Identity Research

This category of research focuses on how broad sociological constructs affect the linkage between consumption and identity. Significant sociological attributes include gender, social class, sexual orientation, age, and race. I will discuss several important sociological factors separately.

Gender role identity research. Gender plays a major role in constructing individuals’ identities. Males may use consumption as a means of proving their masculinity and forming their identity (Belk and Costa 1998; Holt and Thompson 2004; Thompson and Holt 2004; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Whether it is through Harley Davidson motorcycles (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) or pioneering mountain

adventures (Belk and Costa 1998), these consumption behaviors allow males to demonstrate certain aspects of masculinity.

Within all cultures there seem to be certain roles that males take on to prove their masculinity. These male gender roles represent some type of sociocultural perception of what it means to be a man (Holt and Thompson 2004). While there are arguably numerous roles within Western culture, the breadwinner role is one of the more dominant male ideologies (Commuri and Gentry 2005; Holt and Thompson 2004; Thompson and Holt 2004; Tichenor 1999, 2005). It encompasses characteristics such as dependability, modesty, and civility (Holt and Thompson 2004). The primary function of this role is to provide one's family with the material objects they need and/or want, such as food, shelter, and clothing. Holt and Thompson (2004) describe breadwinners as hard workers who are "paragons of family values and community pillars" (127). They illustrate this idea with father figures from popular culture, such as James Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life* and Michael Landon in *Little House on the Prairie*.

Males can use consumption to communicate the fulfillment of this role to others (Holt and Thompson 2004). For example, they might use their house to represent their ability to provide shelter. Commuri and Gentry (2005) argue that "it is often asserted that a husband's role and worth are identified with his ability to earn a living for his family" (185). However, in increasingly more families the female has become the chief wage earner (CWE) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1988-1999). This shift fundamentally challenges the traditional male gender role of breadwinner.

Money-related issues result in more distress for families than any other issue (Olson et al. 1983), making resource allocation decisions very important. Families build

hierarchies of rules and policies for allocating resources which are essential to family identity (Broderick 1993). While these vary between families, in some the members with more power may control a greater share of the resources. For example, if the woman is the CWE, she may gain considerable power and control over resource allocation decisions—a potential threat to the idea that the male is the breadwinner.

Thompson and Holt (2004) argue that the changes in traditional male gender roles, such as the breadwinner, can create "uncertainty about what it means to be a man, how one should be a man, and what defines true manhood" (315). This challenge to traditional gender roles can cause males to question their own identity. When the female is the CWE, Commuri and Gentry (2005) find that she will often forego "any recognition that she is the principle economic actor in the household" (192). In these cases the family may engage in resource allocation strategies that permit the male to retain his traditional gender role of provider, thus stabilizing the masculine identity. For example, some families may maintain separate accounts, and have the man pay the bills out of his account, and use the woman's account for luxuries such as travel. While this method can be employed in cases when the man earns enough money to cover the bills, in situations where he does not, the couple will usually pool their money into one account and the female has "the additional burden of persistently disguising her role as primary provider" (Commuri and Gentry 2005, 192).

Social class identity research. Social class is a multifaceted construct that significantly affects individuals' identities. Weber (1983 [1944]) argues that social class comprises two main components: status and power. Status includes not only economic factors such as income, but also relative prestige within a community, as well as

occupational prestige. Power encompasses factors such as economic leverage, authority relationships, and autonomy perceptions in different situational contexts. Components like occupational prestige have significant impact over people's sense of self.

Social class influences individuals' worldviews, attitudes, ideas, traits, and values, which affect not only how they view the world around them, but also how they view themselves. Upper- and middle-class people are generally more ambitious than their working-class counterparts (Bychowski 1970). While those inhabiting the working class value hard work, they often perceive that they are professionally stagnant; in short, they do not believe that their class position will change. Members of the upper and middle class trust that they will achieve their long term goals, whereas working-class individuals do not possess the luxury of financial long-term planning (Terestman, Miller, and Weber 1974). As such, social class heavily influences individuals' perception of their own agency, which directly affects their self-perceptions and identity (Henry 2005). Henry (2005) discusses how working-class and professionals' perceptions of their own agency lead to differences in self-perceptions and expectations. Professionals tend to see themselves as potent *actors* in their own lives (Henry 2005). They perceive that they possess the skills and capabilities to positively affect their destiny. These people view the future as an opportunity to achieve greater success. Conversely, working-class individuals perceive themselves as impotent *reactors* in their lives (Henry 2005). They feel that they do not control what will happen to them and expect the future to be filled with trap doors that will destroy any security they manage to achieve.

Other sociological identity research. The research discussed above represents only a small fraction of the sociological identity research. Scholars have investigated a

vast array of sociological factors. For example, Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) explore racial identity and shopping. Additionally, Kates (2002, 2004) studies sexual identity and consumption. As such, this section of the literature review discusses some of the different types of sociological identity research in order to demonstrate the scope of this area, rather than to detail each individual study.

Family/Other Subcultures Identity Research

This category of identity research can be viewed as a subcategory of sociological research. Epp and Price (2008) argue that "each family houses unique bundles of identities, including the family's collective identity, smaller groups (e.g., siblings, couples, parent-child) relational identities, and individual family members' identities" (50). In other words, not only does a family build an identity as a single entity, but subgroups within the family create relational identities. Furthermore, these dimensions impact an individual's identity.

Families construct and express their identity through consumption in several distinct ways. For example, Broderick (1993) stresses the importance of rituals to families. Family rituals are "a form or pattern of social interaction, which has three unvarying characteristics. First, they are definitely prescribed … Second, there is the element of rigidity … And finally, there is a sense of rightness which emerges from the past history of the process" (Broderick 1993, 202 from Bossard and Boll 1950, 16). In family celebrations, such as Christmas, the family follows an unwritten script that governs how they celebrate the holiday (Rook 1985). For example, every year the father may place the star on top of the Christmas or the family may attend church on Christmas Eve. Similarly, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) find that Thanksgiving is expected to be

extremely traditional. Typically, the same foods are not only served every year, but are also prepared the same way. Oftentimes, family members enact particular roles based on their place within the family.

Another way family identity is created and communicated through consumption is through the passing down of family heirlooms or cherished possessions (Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004). These objects can be a tangible reminder of family identity that is continually passed down through the generations. This process also helps preserve family identity over time and gives the family a sense of continuity. Furthermore, the decision as to which family members will receive these cherished possessions through inheritance can cement certain family roles and relationships (Curasi et al. 2004). For example, a family china set may be passed down to a certain family member, symbolizing her ascension as the family matriarch.

The subculture is another type of group that is important to people's identities. Consumer behavior scholars consistently find that subcultures are financially, socially, and symbolically significant to consumers' lives (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; McGrath, Sherry, and Heisley 1993; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Muniz and Schau 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). In fact, individuals may join particular subcultures that they feel express certain aspects of their identity, making this particular side of themselves more salient. One type of important subculture is a consumption community, which places emphasis on a certain kind of consumption (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). In their article on urban periodic marketplaces, McGrath et al. (1993) find that consumption communities can unite members in the creation of a shared experience. Furthermore, consumption communities promote community members' shared values (McGrath et al. 1993). Celsi et

al. (1993) find that these communities can revolve around a particular activity such as skydiving. I will discuss subcultures in greater detail in a later section on stigma and identity.

Individual Identity Research

One of most important areas of identity research on the individual level involves the concept of self-construal. This concept involves whether people consider themselves more as an individuals or as people in relation to others (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Specifically, those with an independent self-construal define themselves in terms of their unique attributes such as their traits and abilities, whereas people who possess an interdependent self-construal identify themselves by their relationships. For example, a person possessing an independent self-construal might say "I am a friendly person," where someone with an interdependent sense of self may state "I am a mother." While these two selves exist in every person, one tends to dominate in most situations (Markus and Kitayama 1991). For example, individuals brought up in a Western cultural environment tend to develop an independent self-construal, whereas people from Eastern cultures tend to possess a more interdependent sense of self. This being said, the sense of self may be triggered by situational factors (Markus and Kitayama 1991). Furthermore, researchers can also prime self-construal (see Singelis 1994).

The concept of self-construal is important within consumer research. Recent research in this area includes scholarship on risk taking (Mandel 2003; Hamilton and Biehal 2005), brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2005), and persuasion (Agrawal and Maheswaran 2005). The type of self-construal that is salient has a significant influence on the types of risks individuals are willing to take (Mandel 2003). For

example, those with an interdependent self-construal take more financial risks than those who possess an independent sense of self (Mandel 2003). These types of risks might include purchasing items such as stocks, bonds, or even lottery tickets. However, the reverse is true in the case of social choices (Mandel 2003). Social risks are those choices where the outcome is likely to gain either approval or disapproval from an individual's social network. Social risks involve visible consumption, such as fashion choices, rather than private consumption (e.g. toothpaste). Furthermore, Hamilton and Biehal (2005) argue that people who possess a more independent sense of self tend to be more promotion focused. They tend to attempt to maximize gains more than to try to minimize losses and are more likely to make more risky decisions. Conversely, those with an interdependent self-concept are more likely to be prevention focused. In other words, these individuals are more concerned with limiting losses than with maximizing gains. People who tend to be prevention focused make fewer risky decisions in all circumstances. The main difference between these two studies lies in the conceptualization of interdependence. Mandel (2003) defines the concept as "you depend on others," while in Hamilton and Biehal's (2005) research it becomes "others depend on you." This difference suggests that how people are interdependent may affect their choices.

Agrawal and Maheswaran (2005) argue that self-construal directly affects persuasion. Self-construal can be primed in both research studies and advertising. Appeals such as advertisements consistent with the primed self-concept are effective in situations where the individual has a low commitment to the brand. However, when there is high brand loyalty, appeals consistent with chronic sense of self are more effective.

This study shows that brand commitment can act as a moderator for self-construal and persuasion.

Another significant area of research on the individual level for identity is the concept of uniqueness. Some individuals with a high independent self-construal exhibit a strong desire to be unique. Simonson and Nowlis (2000) argue that people who possess this need tend to gravitate towards more unconventional choices. These individuals are less likely to be persuaded by sales promotions or advertising. People with a need for uniqueness are also less likely to seek out "compromise" or safe products that are less likely to be criticized. They are less risk averse and are more likely to take a chance. Furthermore, Berger and Heath (2007) assert that individuals with a need for uniqueness make choices in ways that differ from those around them, in order to purposely to demonstrate their identity. This concept is especially salient when these people make symbolic consumption decisions such as fashion choices. Indeed, consumers' need to highlight their independent sense of self can overwhelm other factors in their decision making process, such as price.

Critique of the Literature

One of the major deficiencies in consumer research on identity is that it is not cohesive. Numerous types of identity are named and explored from the cultural to the individual level, leading to a broad and diverse body of research. Moreover, this diversity makes it difficult to build a body of literature on the subject, where each new study builds on what we already know. Thus, the end result of the identity literature is a highly fragmented set of studies.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while identity may be either explicitly or implicitly involved in a particular study, it is not always the central construct. For example, while much of the acculturation research involves consumer identity, the focus of these studies is acculturation, not necessarily identity. Since identity is not the focal point of the research, many of the studies do not further identity theory as is the case with research in other disciplines. Overall, research on the construct of identity is varied and vast: multiple disciplines use multiple methods to study identity in connection with multiple other constructs. The following section presents a review of the relevant stigma research.

DEFINING STIGMA

The construct of stigma is widely studied in the social sciences in such disciplines as anthropology, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. Furthermore, it is explored across a variety of contexts including social class (Granfield 1991), mental illness (Corrigan and Penn 1999), race (Crandall et al. 2000), and gender (Major and Eccleston 2004). Additionally, consumer researchers examine the concept of stigma among elderly consumers (Tepper 1994), subcultures (Henry and Caldwell 2006; Kozinets 2001), low-literate consumers (Adkins and Ozanne 2005; Viswanathan, Rosa, and Harris 2005), and coupon redeemers (Argo and Main 2008). Despite (or perhaps because of) the plethora of research on stigma, there is a lack of clarity in how stigma is defined. Many scholars researching stigma do not explicitly define the construct and fail to differentiate it from related constructs such as stereotypes (Link and Phelan 2001;

Stafford and Scott 1986). Furthermore, depending on their discipline and what context they are studying, scholars treat the construct differently. For example, many social psychologists treat stigma as a cognitive mechanism through which to understand the process of stereotyping (e.g., Crocker et al. 1998), while sociologists treat stigma as a stressor to study how it affects stigmatized individuals (e.g., Link and Phelan 1999). The research stemming from these different perspectives will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In his seminal book on stigma and stigma management, Goffman (1963) argues that a stigma "refers to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (3). A person's stigma "makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind" (Goffman 1963, 3). Many scholars either explicitly or implicitly rely upon Goffman's (1963) definition or some variation of it. For example, Stafford and Scott (1986) define stigma as "a characteristic of persons that is contrary to a norm of a social unit" (80). Similarly, Crocker et al. (1998) assert that "stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context" (505).

Many stigma definitions contain similarities. First and foremost, the attribute makes the possessor different from what is considered "normal" in some way. Secondly, a stigma is an attribute or characteristic that links the possessor to a particular stereotype. In fact, Goffman (1963) explicitly argues that a stigma "is really a relationship between an attribute and stereotype" (4). Furthermore, the stigma negatively affects how the possessor is viewed. Finally, whether a particular attribute is considered a stigma varies

depending on environmental and situational factors. These similarities are interrelated and are discussed in more detail below.

Commonalities in Stigma Definitions

In order for stigmatization to occur, the attribute in question must be connected with negative evaluations and stereotypes (Jones et al. 1984). There are many human differences that are not generally stigmatized, while other differences are routinely subjected to stigmatization. Only those attributes that are inconsistent with society's stereotype of what is "normal" are considered stigma. The process of identifying the differences that will be stigmatized is largely a social one (Crocker et al. 1998). Link and Phelan (2001) argue that "the full weight of this observation is often overlooked because once differences are identified and labeled, they are typically taken for granted as being just the way things are—there are black people and white people, blind people and sighted people, people who are handicapped and people who are not" (367).

These differences link the possessor to a particular stereotype which causes the attributes to become stigmatized (Link et al. 1987). For example, Link et al. (1987) find that people are more likely to view a person in a vignette as dangerous when he or she is identified as a former mental patient than as a former back-pain patient, because of the stereotype that mental patients are violent. Furthermore, people who possess these differences are considered separate from the norm. Stigmatized individuals are often considered on the outside of mainstream society and may possess an "us" versus "them" mentality (Morone 1997). Simply put, society places those who are different in a separate group, downplaying any similarity or connection with those they consider different from

themselves. This process makes it easier for society to assign negative stereotypes to the stigmatized individuals.

Types of Stigma

Goffman (1963) argues that there are three different types of stigma: (1) abominations of the body, (2) blemishes of individual character, and (3) tribal stigma. Abominations of the body refer to physical anomalies, such as handicaps. Blemishes of individual character are "perceived as weak will, domineering, or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty" (Goffman 1963, 4). These stigmas are primarily mental, as is the case with depression or alcoholism. Tribal stigmas are those passed down through hereditary lineage, such race, nationality, and oftentimes religion. Stigmas may or may not be discernible (Goffman 1963). As with the definition of stigma, many scholars utilize Goffman's typology of stigmas to inform their own. For example, Major and O'Brien (2005) argue that stigmas can be based on appearance, behavior, or group membership.

Each stigma is different, with its own stereotypes and history. Link and Phelan (2001) also find that stigmas are a matter of degree. That is, particular attributes may be associated with stereotypes of varying degrees of negativity. For example, the stigma of being African-American may be greater than that associated with being Jewish. Furthermore, the degree of separation between the social norm and the stigmatized attribute can vary greatly. Oftentimes it is not simply whether or not an individual possesses a certain stigmatized attribute, but also how much of the attribute the individual is thought to possess.

RAMIFICATIONS OF STIGMA

The effects of stigmatization for individuals vary widely, depending on contextual and individual factors, such as stigma sensitivity and group identification (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Major and O'Brien 2005). However, some ramifications are common across contexts. Each category is discussed below, followed by a critical review of the literature on the ramifications of stigma.

Psychological Ramifications

Overall, stigmatized individuals tend to possess lower levels of psychological well-being than those who do not face stigmatization (Markowitz 1998), as well as a compromised quality of life (Rosenfield 1997). They often must cope with feelings of despondency and helplessness (Abramson et al. 1989). Stigmatized individuals also tend to suffer from low self-worth and depression (Abramson et al. 1989; Link et al. 1997) and lower self-esteem (Allison 1998; Wright, Gronfein, and Owens 2000). These types of results support the idea that stigmatization leads to negative psychological ramifications.

Some stigmatized individuals work extremely hard to disprove the stereotypes associated with stigma, reflected in a phenomenon called "John Henryism," named for the informant who James, Hartnett, and Kalsbeek (1983) and James et al. (1984) observe exhibiting such efforts. The researchers find that some African-Americans work to overcome such stereotypes as laziness and intellectual inferiority. This tendency places tremendous stress on these individuals as they labor to prove that they transcend the stereotype. The authors find these efforts can result in hypertension and anxiety.

Furthermore, Steele and Aronson (1995) argue that stigmatized individuals perceive the stereotypes others ascribe to them and that this perception produces measurable effects. For example, if African-Americans believe they are often considered intellectually inferior to other races, their awareness of this stereotype can affect their academic performance. In the authors' study, they find that when African-Americans are told that SAT exams are a measure of ability, they score lower than Caucasian people. However, when the exam is not framed as a measure of ability, they perform as well as Caucasians.

Status Loss

One of the most prevalent consequences of stigmatization is status loss, or the reduction in an individual's rank or class (Link and Phelan 2001). Stigmatized individuals are connected to undesirable characteristics that reduce their status compared to other non-stigmatized individuals. Thus, stigmatization automatically pushes an individual downward in the status hierarchy. This loss of status is accompanied by the loss of prestige and power, which may result in additional ramifications such as loss of employment opportunities. For example, males and white people tend to achieve higher status than females and African-Americans (Mullen, Salas, and Driskell 1989). Males and Caucasians are also more likely to attain positions of power. Mullen et al. (1989) also find that race and gender influence the status hierarchies within small groups of unacquainted people, even if external status has no bearing on the task the groups are meant to perform.

Discrimination

Stigmatized individuals often face discrimination throughout their everyday lives (Link and Phelan 2001) – from where they live (e.g., Nelson 2002) to where they work (e.g., Crandall and Eshleman 2003). Stigmatized individuals face individual, structural, and status loss discrimination.

Individual discrimination is the typical form of discrimination in which one person discriminates against another because of the stereotypes associated with the stigmatized attribute (Major and O'Brien 2005). For example, if the stigmatizor is an employer, he or she might adhere to the stereotype that Hispanics are intellectually inferior and therefore discriminate against a Hispanic employee and deny him or her a promotion.

Structural discrimination refers to broader institutional practices that work to the disadvantage of stigmatized individuals (Hamilton and Carmichael 1967). Stigmatized people generally possess less power and prestige than those who do not face stigmatization. Many institutional practices reinforce discrimination against stigmatized individuals. For example, socially mobile people who grew up in the working class retain a distinct disadvantage in the workforce, as they do not enjoy the social connections needed to be considered for many positions (Granfield 1991). Thus, members of the working class often remain outside of the social networks that assist people in the workforce.

As discussed above, one of the consequences of stigmatization is status loss (Link and Phelan 2001). Unfortunately, status loss results in additional discrimination. Being lower on the status hierarchy carries with it additional negative stereotypes for those

people, such as laziness. Stigmatized individuals often find themselves further stigmatized for their status. This new stigma results in additional discrimination, which can take the form of either individual discrimination or structural discrimination.

Sociological Factors

Stigmatized people face additional difficulties and challenges in their everyday lives. For example, they often earn lower incomes than those who are not stigmatized (Link 1982; Link et al. 1987). Stigmatized individuals also do not tend to possess influential social networks (Link et al. 1989). As discussed previously, smaller and less influential social networks can result in structural discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, stigmatized groups may face fewer opportunities for education. In fact, differences in academic performance are often linked to individual and situational discrimination (Steele 1997). Finally, stigmatized people may lack possess less access to healthcare and are at greater risk for health-related problems such as cardiovascular disease, in part because of the extra stress placed on their bodies from stigmatization (Contrada et al. 2001).

Critical Review of the Ramifications of Stigma Literature

The ramifications of stigma are diverse and can permeate stigmatized individuals' lives. However, the ramifications vary depending on the context and other individual moderators, such as stigma sensitivity. Stigma sensitivity refers to how much an individual's stigma affects his or her identity (Major and O'Brien 2005). In order to better understand the ramifications of stigma, scholars must also study these types of moderators.

Much of the stigma research is also context-specific. While many of the research findings are consistent, researchers rarely discuss how their results compare with those of other studies. This lack of communication results in some of the findings being over-replicated in multiple studies. In contrast, the absence of research explaining some potential moderators also leads to conflicting results in some cases. For example, while many researchers find that stigmatization negatively affects self-esteem (e.g., Allison 1998), others conclude the opposite (e.g., Crocker et al. 1994). These studies use different measures for the same construct and often ignore work that has been previously completed.

RESEARCHING STIGMA

Given the plethora of research on stigma, it is not surprising that scholars utilize a variety of different methods to study the construct. For example, experiments are often used to test the ramifications of stigmatization. The following section discusses the major methods used to study stigma, including experimental, scale development, and qualitative techniques. Consumer research stigma studies are discussed in a later section.

Experimental Research

Much of the experimental research on stigma examines the ramifications of stigmatization. These studies are concerned with how stigmatization affects individuals. For example, in an experimental study described above, Steele and Aronson (1995) show that race stigmatization can lead to lower standardized test scores. These types of studies help scholars better understand the effects of stigmatization. Other experimental studies

research the effects of stigmatization on psychological factors such as overall well-being (e.g., Markowitz 1998), quality of life (e.g., Rosenfield 1997), helplessness (e.g., Abramson et al. 1989), self-worth (e.g., Abramson et al. 1989), depression (e.g., Link et al. 1997) and self-esteem (e.g., Allison 1998; Wright et al. 2000).

Scale Development

Scholars develop scales primarily to answer two types of research questions. First, researchers build scales to measure an individual's stigma. For example, Bagley and King (2005) use scales to measure mental health services users' stigma. Gathering such measures over time allows scholars to identify potential successful and unsuccessful management strategies. For example, Bagley and King (2005) find that individuals who engage in voluntary active management strategies are more likely to experience a decrease in their stigma level than those who do not engage in such strategies.

Scholars also use scales to measure societal stigma, which refers to the level of stigma society assigns to a particular negative attribute. Crandall (1991) presents a scale to measure AIDS stigma depending on how the disease was contracted. For example, individuals who contract AIDS through IV drug use are stigmatized more severely than those who contract the disease through a blood transfusion. Measuring society's AIDS stigma provides scholars with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This process also illustrates how certain attributes are viewed by society. The scales tend to be context specific. For example, researchers could not use Crandall's (1991) AIDS stigma scale to measure race-related issues.

Qualitative Research

Compared to experimental studies, there are significantly fewer qualitative studies that explain stigma. The research that uses these methods explores individuals' whole experiences with stigma, rather than focusing on one aspect, such as its ramifications. These types of studies often involve storytelling and narrative descriptions. For example, Howarth (2006) uses interviews to study race as stigma—exploring issues from its development to stigma resistance to stigma ramifications.

Qualitative stigma studies also explore the interrelationships between stigma and other constructs, such as identity. For example, Poindexter (2005) argues that individuals who reject society's ideas about their stigma can utilize their rejection as an identity frame; e.g., by labeling oneself as "me" and others who subscribe to the stigma as "not me." In such cases, Poindexter (2005) finds that people's active resistance of stigmatization becomes increasingly important. If one does not actively resist the stigmatization, one becomes part of the "not me" contingent, a classification that undermines identity.

Methodological Evaluation

Each of the different methods contributes to the overall stigma literature. However, most focus heavily on one aspect of stigma, ignoring the fact that it is a multifaceted and complex construct. For example, many researchers who study the ramifications of stigma do not examine potential moderators such as management strategies, which significantly affect how individuals cope with stigmatization. Thus, scholars do not acquire a clear picture of the stigmatization process. Furthermore, while qualitative studies can offer a richer understanding of stigmatized individuals' lived

experiences and may address some of these issues, these studies are context-specific and their findings are often difficult to generalize. However, this is not a criticism aimed at to qualitative stigma research, but often at qualitative research in general.

STIGMA MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Stigma management consists of the strategies employed by the stigmatized individual, or by another on his or her behalf, to cope with the stigma (Goffman 1963). People can engage in stigma management in a variety of ways. Some people may attempt to correct the undesirable attribute (Goffman 1963). Unfortunately, these attempts may leave the stigmatized individual vulnerable to fraudulent providers, such as faith healers. Other individuals may attempt to master whatever is closed off to them by their stigma (e.g., when a paralyzed person tries to learn to walk). Still others come to embrace their stigmas, viewing them as a "blessing in disguise." People can also attempt to control who knows about their stigma, a process Goffman (1963) refers to as "information control." Goffman (1963) asserts that other individuals align themselves with others who possess the same stigma, a concept known as group alignment.

Other scholars build on Goffman's (1963) typology of stigma management strategies. For example, Miller and Kaiser (2001) identify ten coping strategies: (1) resignation, (2) confrontation, (3) enclave withdrawal, (4) mainstream engagement, (5) concealment, (6) escapism, (7) hedonism, (8) spiritualism, (9) nostalgia, and (10) creative production. These can occur independently or concurrently. Table 2.2 summarizes these strategies – many of which parallel those identified by Goffman. For example, both the

Goffman and Miller and Kaiser work list concealment as a management strategy. Furthermore, Goffman's "blessing in disguise" strategy is closely related to Miller and Kaiser's (2001) strategy of spiritualism. (See appendix for more detailed information.)

Other scholars examine how mediating factors affect management strategies. For example, negative consequences of stigmatization, such as discrimination, can increase the stress level of stigmatized people (Allison 1998). Compas et al. (2001) explore how stress levels affect stigmatized individuals' coping strategies. They argue that there are two main categories of coping strategies to manage the stress of being stigmatized. *Voluntary* coping strategies are tactics through which stigmatized individuals willingly and actively participate in managing stigma. These include disengagement devices such as voluntary avoidance, denial, and wishful thinking, as well as engagement strategies such as distraction, cognitive restructuring, acceptance, problem solving, emotional regulation, and emotional expression. *Involuntary* coping strategies are those used by stigmatized individuals who do not willingly manage their stigma. These tactics include involuntary avoidance, physiological arousal, emotional arousal, rumination, intrusive thoughts, and intrusive actions.

STIGMA AND STIGMA MANAGEMENT IN CONSUMER RESEARCH

There is not a great deal of research that explicitly examines stigma and stigma management in consumer research compared to other social science disciplines. In the majority of articles mentioning the construct, it remains relegated to the background and researchers often fail to unpack all of the components of stigma. Furthermore, the

literature that does exist tends to be context specific. Yet, while there is a dearth of scholarship that explicitly investigates stigma in consumer research, the construct is implicitly prevalent throughout the literature. The following sections discuss stigma research in consumer behavior as it is located in the areas of shopping behavior, product stigma, brand stigma, identity, subcultures, and acculturation. I then offer a critical analysis of this literature.

Stigma and Shopping Behavior in the Marketplace

Stigmatization significantly affects consumer shopping behavior in the marketplace. For example, elderly consumers are often stigmatized by their age. Tepper (1994) explores how elderly people respond to age segmentation cues such as senior citizen discounts. While elderly individuals often dislike being segmented by this dimension, some do not mind receiving discounts and promotions that accompany the practice (Tepper 1994). However, in order to take advantage of these discounts and promotions, elderly consumers must acknowledge that they possess an attribute that is stigmatized—namely their age. While a number of elderly people will admit their senior citizen discount eligibility regardless of their audience, others reject or selectively use the discounts to manage the stigmatization.

Some elderly individuals deny they are eligible for a senior citizen discount, an action Goffman (1963) describes as informational control. Other elderly consumers concede their eligibility, but decline the discounts so they can reject their senior citizen status and the stigma surrounding it. Some elderly people refrain from using discounts if they are around others who are different from themselves, such as young professionals, because they do not want to call attention to their differences. In these cases, the elderly

individuals will acknowledge the stigmatizing attribute when surrounded by others who share it. However, they will not explicitly confess to their senior citizen eligibility among those dissimilar in age, in an attempt to conceal the stigma.

Furthermore, certain stigmas present the possessors of these characteristics with challenges in the marketplace. Stigmatized people may face difficulties in the market because of their limitations, such as low income or literacy. In their article about functionally illiterate consumers, Viswanathan et al. (2005) find these individuals use a variety of avoidance and confrontative coping strategies to navigate the marketplace. The authors use the term "functionally illiterate" to specify a sub-group of low literate consumers who do not "have the language and numeracy competencies required to function adequately as adults in day-to-day life" (Viswanathan et al. 2005, 15; from Kirsch and Guthrie 1977).

When using avoidance coping strategies, functionally illiterate people actively attempt to avoid outcomes such as stress, overspending, and embarrassment (Viswanathan et al. 2005). For example, they may continually patronize the same store rather than trying new ones to avoid the stress associated with unfamiliar environments. Furthermore, functionally illiterate people often focus on a single dimension or attribute of a product to make a decision, a phenomenon known as concrete reasoning (Viswanathan et al. 2005). They may focus exclusively on price without considering other attributes such as quantity, which allows them to avoid product comparisons across multiple dimensions. Similarly, they often only buy known brands. These types of decision-making mechanisms can inhibit marketers from articulating to these consumers the benefits of new products. Additionally, functionally illiterate people may only carry a

certain amount of money with them to shop, to lessen their chances of overspending or being cheated by store employees. They also often pretend to evaluate products or imitate having a disability in order to avoid disclosing any deficiencies that may lead to stigmatization by others (Viswanathan et al. 2005).

When engaged with confrontative strategies, functionally illiterate consumers are frank about their limitations and utilize resources around them to navigate in the market (Viswanathan et al. 2005). For example, they may plan their spending with family members or friends. Similarly, these individuals can shop with those in their social networks who can provide them with assistance. They may also ask for help from store employees and even develop relationships with those with whom they interact on a regular basis. Functionally illiterate consumers may also confront store employees over unaccommodating or discourteous behavior and insist on better treatment.

Adkins and Ozanne (2005) argue that low literate consumers not only confront challenges in the market because of their limitations, but they also often face stigmatization, because they do not meet society's educational expectations (Beder 1991). Low literate individuals use a variety of coping strategies to manage their stigma in the marketplace (Adkins and Ozanne 2005). Some accept their stigma, suggesting "their failure to gain adequate literacy skills socially discredited them, which was experienced as making them feel 'bad,' embarrassed,' and 'ashamed.'" (Adkins and Ozanne 2005, 96). These consumers develop either narrow or broad coping strategies in the marketplace. When they utilize narrow coping strategies, they memorize visual information such as brand names, logos, and packaging (Adkins and Ozanne 2005). They rely on visual information to select products, often restricting the products they buy to

what is familiar. These people often preplan their shopping trips and frequent a small group of stores. They dislike having to interact with people they do not know and cling to the familiar. They also rarely disclose their stigma to anyone they do not trust, using excuses such as forgetting their glasses or experiencing a headache to avoid being in situations where they are forced to disclose their illiteracy.

Low literate consumers who accept their stigma and employ broad coping strategies are better able to manage this condition (Adkins and Ozanne 2005). While they utilize the narrow coping strategies such as memorizing visual cues, they also possess additional coping strategies. For example, these consumers leverage their interpersonal skills to a greater degree. Freely acknowledging their educational deficiencies, they seek out store employees and other customers to assist them in the marketplace. Furthermore, since low literate individuals who use broad coping strategies are willing to pursue help, they are not as likely to limit the products they buy or the stores they frequent. Many of these strategies are similar to the ones described by Viswanathan et al. (2005).

Other low literate consumers negotiate their stigma (Adkins and Ozanne 2005). That is, they enter literacy programs where they interact with others who are similar to them. Attending these programs increases their self-esteem. These people expand their coping skills from those previously discussed. For example, they can start to read labels and look for sales. They also start to feel more comfortable asking other people for assistance. These individuals enjoy more freedom and start to purchase new products and brands. The last group of low literate consumers Adkins and Ozanne (2005) discuss are those who reject the stigma. They actively try to improve their literacy skills and become more confident and feel comfortable shopping.

As described previously, people can be stigmatized by the actions of others, a phenomenon Goffman terms "courtesy stigma." Courtesy or associative stigma may occur in the marketplace. For example, not only may consumers who use coupons be stigmatized as "cheap," but those around them can also be stigmatized through association (Argo and Main 2008). This is especially true when the coupon is of low value as opposed to a high-value coupon. Furthermore, if a social relationship exists between the shopper using the coupon and another shopper, the resulting associative stigma is greater (Argo and Main 2008). However this effect disappears if the two shoppers are not located in the same geographic proximity. For example, if they are in different checkout lines, the physical separation reduces the associative stigma for the non-coupon redeeming shopper.

Brand Stigma

Just as individuals face stigmatization, brands also confront stigma. While explicit research on brand stigma is nonexistent, consumer researchers implicitly study the construct through their research on brands and stereotypes. Grugg and Hupp (1968) argue that as consumers purchase brands consistent with their desired self-image, particular brand owners are associated with certain stereotypes. For example, Volkswagen owners stereotypically possess attributes like thriftiness and economy while Pontiac GTO owners are status-conscious and adventurous. These brand-user stereotypes reflect on the brand, which affects how (or if) other individuals consume it. Furthermore, similar to individual stigmatization, whether a particular brand attribute is stigmatized depends on situational and environmental factors. Munson and Spivey (1981) assert that the stereotypes of the users of a brand vary depending on social class. That is, stereotypes held by working-

class consumers about a person driving a Ford automobile are different than those maintained by upper-class individuals.

Brands face stigmatization on a variety of attributes. For example, country-of-origin (COO) stereotypes affect consumers' opinions of a brand (Peterson and Jolibert 1995). If a brand possesses French origins, it may be associated with French stereotypes, such as being "snobby." Furthermore, Liu and Johnson (2005) argue that the country of origin affects consumer perceptions of a brand even when marketers do not actively promote the COO. Other brand attributes are also stigmatized, including personality and product-related attributes. Aaker (1997) asserts that brands possess a personality, which she defines as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (347). In some situations, these characteristics or attributes result in brand stigmatization. Some consumers stigmatize Birkenstock brand shoes as "hippie," for instance.

Similar to brands, products also face stigmatization in the marketplace. Ellen and Bone (2008) find that many consumers regard genetically modified foods to be a health risk, even though there is no scientific evidence to support the belief. Additionally, consumers view these foods as deviant and form a negative opinion of them.

Stigma, Identity, and Consumption

Consumption plays a significant role in consumer identity. Products can possess significant cultural meanings as they are a "vital, tangible record of cultural meaning that is otherwise intangible" (McCracken 1986, 61). As such, individuals project themselves into products, as these objects come to symbolize some part of their identity (Belk 1988; Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry1989). Furthermore, people may use consumption to formulate identities that alleviate stigma (Neves 2004). For example, lower-class women

in Brazil use cleaning products to reformulate their identity from "poor" to "poor and clean," reducing the stigmatization associated with their lower economic status. For these consumers, having clean clothes is essential in maintaining a desirable identity. To be "poor and clean" is acceptable to them, but to be "poor and dirty" is an anathema. They wash their clothes multiple times a week, following meticulous rules that they collectively construct. For example, clothes need to be separated a particular way; not just by color (e.g., whites vs. colors), but also by functions (e.g., table lines vs. indoor clothing vs. outdoor clothing). Not sorting the laundry is considered dirty and disgusting according to these prescriptions.

Furthermore, individuals may be stigmatized by their consumption choices. Adolescents often ostracize and ridicule others who do not own the socially correct quantity or selection of products and brands (Wooten 2006). For example, one individual was excluded and teased for having only three pairs of pants. His clothing was a visible representation to others of his lack of cleanliness and economic status. Additionally, adolescents feel they need to purchase particular brand names in order not to be stigmatized. However, individuals may also utilize consumption to change a particular stigma. Sandikci and Ger (2010) find that urban Turkish veiled women transformed the negative stereotype associated with covering their heads. What was once considered negative is now seen as an attractive, fashionable choice.

Stigma and Subcultures

Stigma is often a significant underlying factor in consumption subcultures. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) assert that a consumption subculture is "a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular

product class, brand, or consumption activity" (43). However, members of subcultures are often considered to be socially undesirable and face stigmatization. For example, members of the *Star Trek* subculture are associated with "fanaticism, immaturity, passivity, escapism, addiction, obsessive consumption, and the inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality" (Kozinets 2001, 73). They are perceived as mentally unstable by mainstream society. However, members of this subculture reject the stereotype. They consider those outside the subculture to be less intelligent and imaginative than their fellow members.

These consumers often exist on the fringes of mainstream society and use their subculture as a way of managing their stigma, in a strategy known as enclave withdrawal (Kozinets 2001). For example, by joining the subculture, these people align themselves with others who are also outside mainstream society. Belonging to the subculture provides these stigmatized individuals a sense of community as well as social support, which can be crucial to coping with stigma.

Another way these members may cope is to downplay or conceal their association with the subculture from mainstream society (Kozinets 2001). However, others in the groups may take the opposite approach and deliberately choose to advertise their membership. The ability to either disclose or conceal membership provides members with a sense of empowerment.

Similar to the Star Trek subculture, members of the heavy metal music enclave face stigmatization from mainstream society (Henry and Caldwell 2006). The authors assert that there is "a widespread belief is that HMM followers are 'social misfits' with violent tendencies" (1037). Furthermore, members are often lower class and uneducated,

usually working in semi-skilled occupations. Members use consumption to manage stigma in a variety of ways. One strategy is concealment, where constituents deliberately wear clothing that will disassociate them with the culture to avoid stigmatization (especially in the workplace). Other enclave members employ a confrontation strategy. For example, some affiliates of the group attempt to shock and even offend outsiders by wearing crossbones and other, similar paraphernalia.

Scaraboto and Fischer (2009) argue that some groups of individuals band together to combat stigma, as in the Fat Acceptance Movement (FAM). This subculture uses the internet to combat mainstream assumptions of overweight people (e.g., that they are disgusting and lazy). FAM "denounces the 'weight loss industry,' questions the notion of an obesity epidemic, advocates 'Health at Every Size,' and fights the weight-based discrimination" (Scaraboto and Fischer 2009, 2; from Rabin 2008). Scaraboto and Fischer (2009) draw parallels between the FAM and social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and Feminism. Interestingly this group attempts to combat stigmatization by attacking the relationship between the undesirable attribute (fat) and the corresponding stereotypes (disgusting and lazy).

Stigma and Acculturation

Stigma is also implicitly prevalent throughout the acculturation literature. Acculturation is defined as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first-hand contact," resulting in "changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936, 149). Peñaloza (1994) finds that Mexican immigrants are often physically segregated from American culture. These people live in neighborhoods that are primarily Latino.

This situation limits the individuals' contact with American culture. Because these immigrants are viewed as different and are stigmatized, they are kept apart from "normal" people.

Stigma is an underlying factor in Ustuner and Holt's (2007) research on the acculturation of Turkish women migrants in a squatter village outside a large city. People from the city often look down on those living in the village as poor, dirty, and uneducated. Many of these young women want to disassociate themselves with their homes and escape this stigma. They attempt to mimic fashions from the city and spend much of their leisure time in urban locations. However, when they browse in stores they ask sales associates questions about beauty products like shampoo and deodorant without any intention (or ability) to purchase the products, a practice that aggravates the employees. Similarly, when they patronize urban cafés, they often will watch the locals rather than participate in the social environment. As such, they act more like observers in a museum than members of the urban culture. In short, although the younger Turkish women migrants want to assimilate to the dominant culture, they do not possess the resources to do so (Ustuner and Holt 2007).

When the researchers returned to the village after five years, they found that all but one of the young women had stopped their attempts at assimilation (Ustuner and Holt 2007). After finding they could not conceal their stigma, the women retreated back to their villages. Many were depressed and bitter about not being able to assimilate into city life. All of the women sat for the university exam, but with no resources for tutors, none of them were able to pass it.

Stigma and Stigma Management in Consumer Research: Critical Review

While stigma is implicitly prevalent throughout consumer research, it needs to be brought more to the forefront of the field. It is difficult to fully understand certain phenomena such as acculturation and stereotyping without examining stigma. For example, neither Peñaloza (1993) nor Ustuner and Holt (2007) explicitly discuss stigma, even though it is evident that their informants struggle to manage stigmatization as they attempt to acculturate to a new environment. Likewise, the construct would provide more depth to the findings, allowing these and other scholars to better understand how stigmatization affects acculturation choices, as well as how acculturation influences stigma management.

Even the research that explicitly explores stigma needs to examine the construct more fully. For instance, while Kozinets's (2001) study on stigmatized subcultures illuminates enclave withdrawal as a possible stigma management strategy, it ignores other management strategies and how they affect the ramifications of stigmatization. Furthermore, even though Argo and Main (2008) discuss the possibility of associative stigma in the marketplace, the authors do not address how it affects shopping behavior or management strategies.

Additionally, much of the stigma consumer research is conducted in a vacuum. The researchers do not consult each other's work so that the field builds a body of stigma consumer research, as has occurred with constructs such as materialism. Instead, each piece of stigma consumer research exists on its own. For example, Neves (2004) does not cite any consumer research in the article. In part, this silo effect among the scholarship happens because much of the stigma research is context specific (e.g., low literate

consumers). Authors may not explore literature outside their own context, which results in a disjointed literature. This outcome is even more apparent when stigma is implicitly studied. In order to accumulate a more cohesive literature, researchers need to incorporate others' results into their findings, so that each successive stigma article builds on the previous one.

The following chapter outlines my methodology. I detail my data collection methods. I discuss the in-depth interview process. Furthermore, I review the use of collages and the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) in consumer research and describe how I utilize this projective technique. I include a discussion on researcher perspective and how it affects this research. Lastly, I provide an overview of my data analysis techniques.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss the data collection and analysis methods I employed for this research project. In order to fully answer the research questions, I used multiple qualitative methods. The following section details the data collection methods, while the subsequent section discusses the data analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

I employed a variety of qualitative data collection methods to tap into African-American women's experiences of living with multiple stigmas. First, I conducted 23 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. In conjunction with these interviews, informants constructed collages depicting their identities as African-American women. I recruited informants through advertisements in local newspapers and listserves. Additional participants were recruited from among acquaintance networks of these informants, a procedure known as snowball sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Informants were screened only to the extent that I verified they were African-American women and were available to complete the study. All of the informants lived in a small city in the Midwest (population approximately 100,000). They came from a wide variety of social class backgrounds (e.g., lower working class to upper middle class) and were between the ages of 19 and 56 (See Table 3.1 for informant biographies). Data collection took place during June and July 2010. Informants received $30 for participating. In total, each informant

session (interview and collage combined) lasted two to three hours. (See appendix for informant biographies.)

When employing quantitative research, researchers require a large sample in order to generalize the results to the larger population. However, the parameters of qualitative research imply that the sample sizes are smaller, as the goals of the research are different (McCracken 1988). Specifically, rather than predicting general behavior, the aim of qualitative research is to understand certain phenomena by exploring cultural categories and assumptions from a particular worldview and in a specific context. This fundamental difference between quantitative and qualitative research leads to differences in sample sizes during data collection. While it is impossible to predict at the onset of a qualitative research project the exact number of informants necessary, during data collection researchers look for theoretical saturation. This is the point where results across informant encounters become repetitive and adding an additional informant yields no additional insights into the phenomena being studied (Belk et al. 1989; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

In-depth Interviews

Informants participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews directly after completing their collage constructions. (I will discuss collages in a subsequent section.) McCracken (1988) argues that the depth interview is a particularly powerful data collection method, as it allows researchers to view the "lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (9). The intimate study of informants allows researchers to scrutinize their

worldviews, including how they categorize their experiences and the reasonings behind their assumptions. Furthermore, Richardson (1990) argues that "when people are asked why they do what they do, they provide narrative explanations, not logical-scientific categorical ones. It is the way individuals understand their own lives and best understand the lives of others" (126).

The use of narratives in the form of depth interviews within the consumer behavior discipline has grown dramatically over the last two decades. They have been used to study marketing phenomena such as brand communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Muñiz and Schau 2005), service encounters (Arnould and Price 1993), rituals (Ruth, Otnes, and Brunel 1999; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), and consumer identity (Ahuvia, Iacobucci, and Thompson 2005) as well as numerous other topics. The concept of narrative "refers to any spoken or written presentation, but it is primarily used in a more narrow sense to mean a form or genre of presentation organized in story form" (Schwandt 2001, 168). The term is especially relevant in this study due to the emergence of narratives in the use of both the collage and depth interview data collection procedures.

Qualitative-inquiry scholars in the field promote the use of these data collection techniques in part because of the assumption that they provide the participant with the power to choose an experience to share with the researcher and explain that experience, rather than locating the power in the interaction with the researcher (Hopkinson and Hogg 2007). Depth interviews, especially when paired with collage construction, enable researchers and informants to develop a more equal relationship, which consequently allows informants to feel more comfortable with researchers and encourages candor. This

is especially important when researching traditionally ignored or marginalized subjects, as is the case with this research. These types of methods are an avenue where these marginalized voices can be heard. Hopkinson and Hogg (2007) summarize the marginalization concept when they write that with narrative research, "individual accounts count" (166). For example, Andrews et al. (2004) discuss research on older subjects, who fall into the traditionally marginalized or ignored-subjects domain. Since the subjects had partial control over which experiences they chose to explain, they were able to show the researchers that: "old age, far from representing the disengagement and depression of which we so often hear, was for these men and women a very full moment in their lives, a continuation of all that they had been fighting for" (110).

Consumer behavior researchers are increasingly seeking out these previously unheard voices. For example, Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) ask African-Americans living in a highly segregated community to explain in narrative form their experiences of times when political ideologies affected their decisions on where to shop. Similarly, in their article about functionally illiterate consumers, Viswanathan et al. (2005) find that these individuals use a variety of strategies to navigate the marketplace and can be highly creative and productive. Researchers have also studied other marginalized groups, including overweight individuals (Scaraboto and Fischer 2009), immigrants (Penaloza 1999), and lower-class women (Neves 2004). Utilizing these types of narrative methods focuses much needed attention on marginalized groups.

However it is important to acknowledge that even when narrative methods are used, participants do not gain full power over the research process. First, they must still choose an experience that meets the conditions given by the researcher. Researchers often

use grand-tour questions (McCracken 1988) to elicit a story of the participant's own choosing that meets certain conditions (Otnes, Ruth, Lowrey, and Commuri 2007). For example, I asked participants to recall a time when they faced stigmatization. Secondly, the participants may have little to no control over how the researcher interprets, and ultimately reports, their narratives (Hopkinson and Hogg 2007). Both of these conditions limit the amount of control informants possess. To take Crockett and Wallendorf's (2004) article as an example, participants could only describe instances when political ideology influenced where they decided to shop. Additionally the researchers, rather than the participants, interpreted and reported the narratives.

During the semi-structured in-depth interview, I followed McCracken's four stages: (1) review of analytic categories and interview design, (2) review of cultural categories and interview design, (3) interview procedure and discovery of cultural categories, and (4) interview analysis and the discovery of analytical categories. In the first stage, I completed a literature review focused on the relevant constructs—namely stigma, race, gender, and identity—in order to gain a holistic understanding of the current research and to identify themes in the literature.

During the next step, I reviewed the cultural categories to better understand how constructs such as family, religion, fashion, and history fit into everyday life. This step also included examining my assumptions about the topic. Third, I constructed the interview guide with open-ended "grand-tour" questions to gain holistic descriptions of the informants' experiences with race and gender stigmatization. Grand- tour questions allow researchers to start out with more general questions before focusing on more

pointed, specific issues. These broader questions also allow informants to become more comfortable with the interviewer before delving into more sensitive ones.

I conducted the interviews following McCracken's (1988) guidelines. For example, I did not attempt to direct the interview. Rather, I allowed the informants to answer the questions freely. Furthermore, the semi-structured format allowed for follow-up questions to clarify informants' answers. Lastly, I analyzed the interview data in concert with the collage pictorial data and attempted to discover analytic categories that illuminate the interrelationships among the constructs (Tuncay 2005). The data analysis process is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Collages

Utilized in a variety of disciplines ranging from anthropology, sociology, psychology, semiotics, and consumer research, collages allow informants to select visual images they feel are pertinent to the research topic from magazines, newspapers, and other sources (Coulter, Zaltman, and Coulter 2001). Informants can utilize the visual to better answer researcher questions. The selection of these images also allows them greater control over the data collection process and signals the constructs and concepts they find the most relevant to their own experiences. The pictorial representations can offer additional insights into the informants' worldview. The collage technique also provides informants with a better way to represent their thought processes to researchers (Coulter et al. 2001).

Consumer researchers use collages as a way to study the construction of identity (e.g., Chaplin and John 2005; Tuncay 2005). Furthermore, collage construction allows scholars to explore relationships between the focal construct and the individual's identity.

This technique is based on the premise that much communication is nonverbal. In fact, Coulter and Zaltman (1994) assert that approximately 80 percent of communication is presented in this manner and can be captured through this data collection method (Howes 1991; Montagu 1986; Stoller 1989). Furthermore, four to five interviews can yield up to 90% of the information gathered in a larger sample that does not use this technique, allowing for smaller sample sizes than would otherwise be necessary (Coulter et al. 2001).

Collage construction. For the purpose of this study, informants were instructed to create a collage illustrating their identities as African-American women. They were given poster board, glue, scissors, markers, and a selection of magazines. Informants received magazines from a wide variety of genres, including fashion, travel, home décor, food, sports, and business, as well as those specifically targeted to African-Americans. Specific titles included *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Travel and Leisure*, *Food and Wine*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, *Essence*, *O, Working Mother*, and *Home and Gardens*. I also asked informants if there were any magazines that I did not include that they thought should be available. They suggested *Heart and Soul*, *Monarch*, and *Black Enterprise*. I made these magazines available to subsequent participants. Informants were also told that if they could not find a visual representation of an image they would like to include on their collages, they could draw or write it on the poster board. Similar to the procedure that Chaplin and John (2001) employed, I showed informants a sample collage unrelated to this research project to avoid any preconceived notions regarding what their collage should or should not include. In other words, if I had shown them an example from this

project, that example could have influenced the images or categories on their own collages. Informants took between 30 to 120 minutes to construct their collages.

Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET). I used the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) in concert with semi-structured in-depth interviews to analyze each collage, and to explore how the pictorial data relates to the informant's identity. Consumer researchers have used ZMET to study such constructs as advertising and brands (Coulter and Zaltman 1994; Coulter et al. 2001), materialism (Chaplin and John 2005), and masculinity (Tuncay 2005). Collage construction and the ZMET allow informants to use the visual imagery as a projective aid. The images enable researchers to tap into higher-order constructs as informants discuss "characteristics individuals cannot or will not see in themselves" with others, without fear that the characteristic will reflect back on themselves (McGrath, Sherry, and Levy 1993, 172). This separation permits informants to be more open with researchers about their worldviews; it also partially negates the lack of an emic perspective.

ZMET consists of ten core steps: (1) storytelling, (2) missed images, (3) sorting task, (4) construct elicitation, (5) most representative picture, (6) opposite images, (7) sensory images, (8) mental map, (9) summary image, and (10) consensus map (Coulter and Zaltman 1994). During storytelling, I asked the informants to describe each picture they selected for their collages. They explained the pictorial context and why it was chosen. Specifically, we discussed how the images relate to their own experiences living with multiple stigmas since the focus of this dissertation essay is on intersectionality. During the second step, missed images, the participants discussed any pictures or category of pictures they did not include and why those pictures or categories are

significant. For example, one informant did not include any pictures of males on her collage because men often are not a part of her life. This lack of masculine presence contributes to her independence; thus, it is still an important part of her lived experience.

In the third step, the sorting task, I asked informants to organize the pictures into what they thought were meaningful categories. This task allowed me to see how they structure their worldview. During the fourth step, construct elicitation, participants explained how the images were similar or different from each other to gain a better understanding of the relationship between constructs. In the fifth step, informants selected the most representative image(s) on their collage. As with Chaplin and John (2005) and Tuncay (2005), informants chose which pictures were most significant by placing stars beside those they felt were the most important to their identity as African-American women. Furthermore, if certain pictures were particularly important, they placed multiple stars beside them.

In the sixth step, opposite images, the informants discussed what they considered to be the opposite of the pictures they selected. Many informants initially struggled with this step. However, after I provided them with an example from the sample collage, this step became particularly important to this study. Oftentimes, informants included pictures on their collage that represented stereotypes they faced in their everyday lives. For example, one informant selected an image of a fashionably-dressed woman who looked like she was a "diva." The informant explained that people expected her to fit the stereotype of being "diva-licious," but that is not her real identity. Other informants also included other pictures that represented their own identities, and when I asked them to

talk about the opposite of the image, they discussed a stereotype that they felt did not represent their identities.

In the seventh step, sensory images, I asked participants to describe the aesthetic components and emotional reactions each picture elicited. During the eighth step, the mental map, informants discussed the interrelationships among the images they selected. Next, informants completed the ninth step, summary image, by describing their collage as a whole in a few sentences. For the final step, consensus map, I analyzed the collage for important emergent constructs, themes, and interrelationships. (See appendix for pictures of sample collages.)

DATA ANALYSIS

Researcher Perspective

It is important to note that while the informants of this study are African-American women, I am a Caucasian female, making me an outsider in this group. Within social science research, there is a debate about whether an emic or an etic point of view yields the best results. An emic perspective emerges if the researcher is an insider, what Geertz (1983) refers to as "experience-near," while an etic perspective is "experience-distant" where the researcher has an outsider perspective. With an emic viewpoint, the researcher possesses the advantage of understanding the "language" the informants speak. In other words, since the researcher is a part of the group, he or she understands the worldview that the informants possess. However, an etic perspective allows the researcher to question suppositions and ideas that the group takes for granted, to obtain a

picture not only of the worldview of the informants, but also of the assumptions underlying that point of view.

Geertz (1983) argues that both perspectives are necessary in qualitative research, as emic research leaves researchers "awash in immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular," while etic research results in the researcher being "stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon" (57). The need for both perspectives is one of the reasons why qualitative research is often performed collaboratively with a mix of emic and etic experiences. However, dissertation research is performed independently, rather than collaboratively. Not being an African-American woman, I therefore can only offer an etic perspective. In order to combat the lack of an emic perspective, during the data analysis I conducted extensive research on the subculture in question, consulting literature in anthropology, sociology, family studies, and Black feminism.

Data Output

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for data analysis. In total the transcribed text yielded more than 650 pages of text. On average, each interview was approximately 30 double-spaced pages. Additionally, I collected 23 usable collages to analyze. Each collage was scanned and saved in a color pdf file for ease of data analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

Throughout the data analysis process, I adhered to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) tenets of grounded theory. In contrast to the tenets of quantitative research, the grounded theory perspective argues that rather than enter a study with a prior hypotheses, researchers should develop analytic codes and categories from the data. Strauss and

Corbin (1990, 1998) advocate three levels of coding: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding.

The purpose of open coding is to "disentangle" or segment the data by identifying key codes and concepts within the text and pictorial data. This process allows researchers to gain a more holistic understanding of the data. Preliminary open coding can result in numerous codes (Strauss and Corbin 1990), so the researcher must first organize the codes into meaningful categories. In analyzing both the collages and the written text from the in-depth interviews, I searched for emergent themes while also engaging in dialectical tacking (Strauss and Corbin 1998). That is, I conducted a cursory analysis on all of the interviews and collages and summarized each informant encounter to identify preliminary codes, which I then organized into categories for each research question.

During the second level of coding, axial coding, researchers seek to refine the preliminary categories. In this step, researchers examine the relationships among the thematic categories in order to distinguish each individual category. In Strauss and Corbin's (1998) paradigm model, they argue that the refined categories become "(1) a phenomenon for this category and/or (2) the context or conditions for other categories, or, for a third group of categories, (3) a consequence" (Flick 2009, 311). Researchers must practice inductive and deductive analysis, relying on an iterative process of continuously developing categories and concepts and testing the categories and concepts against the data. In this stage, I went through the data multiple times in order to refine my analysis. I also analyzed each category individually, as well as considering it as part of the whole. More specifically, while I examined each category individually, I also explored how they related to each other and fit into the overall research model I developed. This process

allowed me to combine certain categories that were similar and tease other categories apart in order to better answer the research questions.

Throughout the final stage of coding, selective coding, researchers must winnow the data and further refine thematic categories. Researchers should also explore informants' assumptions about their experiences and question why they hold these suppositions. Furthermore, they must continuously refer to the interdisciplinary literature to discover consistencies and inconsistencies with the data in order to further current theoretical frameworks and develop new theory. During this stage, I delved into the literature on intersectionality as well as the research on race and gender. Furthermore, as the concept of identity gaps emerged in the data, I immersed myself in the identity scholarship in both consumer research and other social science disciplines.

In the next chapter, I will briefly restate my research questions before presenting my research findings. I discuss each research question individually and present a holistic model that details how race and gender stigmatization affects African-American women's lived experiences.

CHAPTER 4: INTERPRETATION

In this chapter, I will briefly review my research objectives before presenting the interpretation. Over the course of this chapter, I will use identity gap theory to develop a holistic, theoretical model of how stigma affects African-American women's consumption decisions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As previously stated, this dissertation explores how African-American women manage multiple stigmas. It also focuses on how the intersectionality between race and gender stigmas creates a unique experience for these women. This dissertation will address the following research questions:

1. What stereotypes do African-American women face due to race and gender stigmas?
2. How do informants perceive that consumption contributes to the development or continuation of these stereotypes?
3. How do these stereotypes affect African-American women's identities?
4. How do African-American women manage race and gender stigmas?
5. Specifically, how do African-American women use consumption to manage these stigmas?

STEREOTYPES (RESEARCH QUESTIONS 1 & 2)

Due to the combined effects of their race and gender, African-American women must confront unique stereotypes that women of other races, and African-American men, do not have to face. These stereotypes affect how African-American women view themselves and how society views them with regard to whether they fit the stereotypes associated with their race and gender (Collins 2000). The stigmatization permeates their lives, affecting nearly every aspect from family relationships (Townsend 2008) to careers (Browne and Misra 2003). My first research question explores what stereotypes African-American women face due to race and gender stigmas, while the second research question examines how consumption contributes to the development and continuation of these stereotypes.

The intersection of race and gender develops very specific stereotypes that make race and gender inseparable. One informant, Rowan, says:

> It's an interesting question to ask, what it means to be an African-American woman. Partly because, at times, I'm not sure if I am identifying with womanhood or African-American, just because they all kind of roll in together.

Rowan's comments reveal that these two attributes do not exist in a vacuum and in fact, mutually construct each other. It is this interdependence of multiple attributes that results in very specific stereotype characteristics, an issue I discuss in more detail below.

Furthermore, these women face stigmatization on both race and gender, which makes the discrimination they face even more pronounced. Cameron notes:

> I just think we face discrimination on a totally different level that I don't think anybody could probably understand. I think it's one thing to be black and that's hard. And that is a constant battle to have to know that I'm black, and I don't care how much people try to act like it's not like that anymore, it is… I don't care that it's two thousand and ten. I don't care if I have the same credentials and education that they have… I'm discriminated [against] just by being black. And on top of that I'm a woman. And I know that white women have faced that. We have all learned that in history books. Women not being able to vote and women's rights and stuff like that. [I]t's compounded for a black woman. Because I got my skin and the fact that I am a woman. So that puts me even further down the totem pole.

By examining the intersection of race and gender, I arrive at a richer understanding of the stereotypes African-American women face, compared research considering race or gender in isolation.

Informants in this study articulate four main areas in which they encounter stigmatization due to their race and gender: (1) sex, (2) financial status, (3) beauty norms, and (4) interpersonal relations. I will unpack each of these areas and the specific stereotypes associated with each. As these research questions set the stage for a deeper theoretical discussion about identity and stigmatization, the analysis of the first two questions is by nature more descriptive than the other research questions I address.

Sexual Stereotypes

Scholars observe that African-American women are often viewed as oversexed and promiscuous (Collins 2000). Furthermore, they are often associated with prostitution and labeled as "sluts." These stereotypes are deeply ingrained and historically bound (Collins 2000; Stephens and Phillips 2003). The roots of African-American women's sexual stereotypes can be traced back through many centuries. In their initial encounters with Africa, European merchants and traders viewed the natives as savage and debauched due to misconceptions about African culture, specifically attire, religious practices, and celebrations (White 1985). Furthermore, during the early seventeenth century, in one of the earliest studies of African women's sexuality, scientists compared African women's genitalia to orangutans' sexual organs (Giddings 1995). This exceptionally degrading analogy contributed to the formation of the sexual stereotypes that portray African-American women as primitive, sexually uninhibited, and less than human (Fausto-Sterling 1995).

Slavery in the United States furthered these stereotypes. African-American women were used as "breeders" to increase the slave population, reinforcing ideas that these women were promiscuous and subhuman (White 1985). Furthermore, during slavery and the Reconstruction period it was not a crime to rape African-American women, promoting the illusion that these women were sexually inviolable; less than human and therefore impossible to violate (White 1985). Unfortunately, many of these perceptions have endured over the years, and African-American women still face these stereotypes. Researchers find that these women are frequently portrayed in the media as promiscuous and more likely than women of other races to participate in sexually deviant

acts (Collins 2000; Stephen and Phillips 2005). In fact, informants argue that their sexuality is criticized more than women of other races. Sonya argues:

> Black female sexuality, we are not seen as graceful. More as kind of a slut I think… because again the stereotype of, I hate to say it but *Girls Gone Wild,* you know, the girl lifting up her shirt? More often than not, it's a white female. No one is going to think any different of her because of that. They might think "Ohhhhh, she had a little incident or run in." Or that "She is just being a college student, she'll grow out of that." For Asian women I think a lot of times that they are hypersexualized in the sense of, "Oh, she is so cute and so dainty," like it's sexually accepted and is not seen as gross and disgusting… Even Latino women, "Oh, she's a sexy Latino. She's spicy." You know, that kind of thing.

Sonya sees the sexuality of African-American women portrayed as base in sharp contrast to other races.

Sexuality is an important component to an individual's identity. People are often defined socially and morally at least in part by their sexuality (Foucault 1978). Simon and Gagnon (1984, 1986) argue that sexual identity frameworks can be viewed as sexual scripts. They help build people's attitudes and beliefs about their own and others' sexuality. These scripts are developed through exposure to sexual messages and are socially constructed and contextually bound. African-American women's sexual stereotypes have persisted throughout history and have evolved into very particular sexual scripts. Unfortunately, when they are broadcast through the media to young African-American females, these scripts can distort their attitudes and beliefs about

sexuality and how their own sexuality identity should be expressed, encouraging promiscuous and unsafe sex practices.

The media reinforcement of these sexual scripts is especially influential to adolescents, significantly affecting how they view their own sexuality and what is acceptable sexual behavior. Young African-American women are constantly exposed to these sexual scripts through the media (e.g., hip hop videos), which can have the effect of socializing them to accept these sexual identities and act on them to the detriment of their health. For example, African-American women run a higher risk of adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases than women of all other races (Centers for Disease Control 2000). Moreover, up to 47% of African-American women experience non-voluntary first sexual encounters, higher than for any other race. These sexually ingrained scripts not only place these females at risk, but also reinforce extant and pervasive stereotypes (Hooks 1992). I will discuss aspects of these reinforced stereotypes in greater depth shortly.

Two specific sexual stereotypes seem especially bound to the cultural identity of African-American women. Specifically, in her seminal book, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, Collins (2000) describes two stereotypes that can be considered sexual scripts: the Jezebel and to a lesser extent, the welfare mother.

The Jezebel, the diva, and the gold-digger. The Jezebel sexual identity revolves around a woman who lacks moral fiber (Collins 2000). She is promiscuous and engages in unprotected sex. She may even be a prostitute and use sex to gain material possessions. The Jezebel cares more about partying, drugs, and sex than being a productive member of

society. This script is similar to the African-American female sexual identity described by Stephens and Phillips (2005) as the Diva. This sexual script portrays an African-American woman who is defined by the men in her life. She has sexual relationships with men to increase her social status.

Related to both the Jezebel and the Diva, the gold-digger hypersexual identity also reflects the assumption that African-American women use their sexuality to entrap men for their money (Stephens and Phillips 2005). One informant, Shenelle, says "It's always in the media that we are gold-diggers…We want to get rich from a NBA player or a football player." These sexual stereotypes denigrate African-American women, reinforcing negative perceptions of this social group.

Furthermore, these stereotypes can directly affect African-American women's social relationships. Specifically, informants note that the sexual stereotypes attached to being an African-American woman directly impact their romantic relationships and men's sexual expectations in these relationships. Cameron says:

> Because you are a black women and they see these girls on videos, "Oh, okay, you're a ho. So I'm [the man] going to come at you sexually, rather than coming at you with some type of respect."

Stereotypes and consumption. In terms of the second research question, both the literature and informants perceive that consumption plays a large role in perpetuating the Jezebel stereotype. Both popular culture portrayals and my informants describe how the promiscuous Jezebel can use her sexuality to acquire what she desires, whether it is drugs, clothing, or money (Collins 2000). She dresses in flamboyant, provocative clothes in order to accentuate her sexuality and get what she wants. Like the Jezebel, the Diva

and Gold-digger also wear expensive clothes to emphasize their sexuality in order to draw men to them (Stephens and Phillips 2005). Rowan expands on these sexual stereotypes:

> Interestingly enough, there is probably a promiscuity [associated with African-American women]. And probably the reason I say that is the things I have seen, and also going through some of the magazines. Even some…that are specific to black culture, there were a lot of references to sex and HIV and a lot of those kinds of things. I guess when I was unconsciously reading through the magazines, I was trying to pick up on what the magazine was even saying about black culture. So I definitely would put that out there. So promiscuity, sort of sexual deviance, I don't know if that's the right term, maybe hypersexual.

Because of the stereotypes, society expects African-American women to make particular consumption decisions (Stephens and Phillips 2005). For example, they are expected to dress in provocative clothing, which is supposed to make them more overtly sexual. Marissa says:

> Black women particularly are seen as sexual objects. I haven't been treated in that way for a long time, but you kind of feel like they expect us to wear our dresses a little shorter, have our boobs out, and that kind of thing. And it irritates me when I see women that are actually dressed like that… I wish that people would be more cognizant of what's going on and how we're portrayed in the… different kinds of media.

These fashion expectations are reinforced through the media in the form of sexual scripts. The media portrays African-American women as oversexed and using their sexuality (including making provocative choices in dress) to find a boyfriend or husband. Media outlets often show men as the way to a better life. Music-related products—and hip hop music in particular—can increase these stereotypes through lyrics and videos that frequently portray African-American women as sexual objects (Stephens and Few 2007). Sonya notes:

> But [hip hop culture] kind of has gone in the kind of direction of, I don't know, gold-diggerish type stuff. And you know as far as treatment of black women and images of black women within certain aspects of hip hop culture is not positive. It's pretty negative… But then I think of artists like Common or The Roots which to me, are the essence of where hip hop music should be, where it comes from. They have more positive imagery, but then when you think of the other artists – very negative. Nellie, for instant, was banned from [XXX] University, which is a black, historically black college because of the negativity and the negative imagery of black women in his music. I stand up for those artists that build positive imagery… I talk to my little brothers about why you should not purchase an album from this individual, because they do not have positive images of black women. And they really replicate those negative stereotypes and again are pretty negative.

Since hip hop is popular with young African-American women, its reinforcement of negative sexual stereotypes and associated sexual identities significantly affects them. Adele says:

> I think [hip hop music] perpetrates a sexual stereotype… I don't like my kids to listen to it. It's kind of graphic and I think it's for an older audience, a more mature audience. I think that it helps perpetrates the stereotype of being oversexual. Not being responsible with your sexuality.

Adele goes on to say that she first became aware of how serious the issue was during a group study where she learned that certain sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV and AIDS, are "reaching black women at a higher rate than anyone else."

Unfortunately informants also confront these sexual stereotypes in their work environments, particularly when they are employed in the service sector. African-American women are more likely to be sexually harassed in the labor market (Browne and Misra 2003). Elise recounts:

> I was still in high school, so I had a job and there were some older men that worked there. And several of them were quite forward. And looking back now I realize they were just creepy old men. They were really trying to hit on this teenage girl. But I never really understood it. I mean, I wondered about it later, when I got older and thought about it. Was the reason they were trying to be sort of grabby was because they thought, "Oh, black girls are easy," or something? Or just more advanced?

In their everyday lives, African-American women are confronted with these stereotypes, in venues ranging from their personal relationships to their consumption choices. These

stereotypes—Jezebel, diva, gold-digger—have evolved into very particular sexual scripts that African-American women are expected to follow.

Welfare mother. Central to the stereotype of the welfare mother is the perception that she is unemployed and lazy (Collins 2000). She lives off the government and has multiple children (with multiple partners) in order to increase her welfare checks. While the primary characteristics of this stereotype are associated with economics, there is a sexual component to this stereotype as well, in that the welfare mother is portrayed as promiscuous and willing to have children with multiple men to increase her standard of living. Because the welfare mother traverses both financial and sexual stereotypes, I will discuss other aspects of this stereotype in more depth in the following section.

Financial Stereotypes

Welfare mother. Research consistently shows that African-American women are frequently portrayed as financially negligent (Collins 2000; Monahan, Shtrulis, and Givens 2005). In short, society perceives African-American women as unemployed, lazy, and uneducated. Collins (2000) argues that African-American women are portrayed as not wanting to be employed and preferring to live on public assistance. Society presumes that African-American women choose to live in poverty because they are too indolent to join the labor force. Furthermore, these women are assumed to be uneducated and willing to resort to dubious means to increase their government benefits. Jennifer succinctly describes this stigmatized identity: "stereotypes of black women are they are lazy, not wanting to work, welfare mothers, blah, blah, blah." Indeed, one of the most prominent stereotypical ascribed identities is this iconic welfare mother.

The welfare mother stereotype consists of two main components. First, as previously discussed, the welfare mother is sexually promiscuous (Collins 1990; Jarrett 1996). Second, the welfare mother is unemployed. She has more children in order to receive government benefits (Collins 1990; Jarrett 1996). She neglects her children and uses government money to pay for her own deviancies, most often a drug addiction.

Collins (1990) argues that this stereotype first emerged in the post-war 1940s United States, as African-American women gained more access to government welfare benefits. During slavery, a high rate of reproduction among African-American women was seen as beneficial, in that this trend increased the slave population. However, after slavery was abolished, this same behavior was viewed negatively, as it threatened to upset the balance of power. That is, whites became concerned that the increasing population of African-Americans would take control of the country. This fear became even more prevalent during the Civil Rights movement. With a significant portion of African-American women living in poverty, often due to racial and gender discrimination, particularly in the labor market, the government increased aid to the population. This assistance allowed the dominant majority to divert attention away from issues pertaining to racial and gender discrimination, particularly in education and employment, and blame African-American women for their own poverty. Cameron discusses how the stereotype endures and how difficult it is to escape the situation.

> A lot of women are stuck on assistance. They don't have an education. They don't come from two-parent households, where they are encouraged to find a career and get themselves together. They are just in a windstorm

> that keeps going around and around. Cycling—get pregnant, have your kids out of wedlock, living off of welfare, having a Section Eight House.

Cycles of poverty reinforce and intensify the welfare mother stereotypes, leading to increasingly negative perceptions of those who require public assistance.

Of all of the stereotypes associated with African-American women, the welfare mother is one of the most pervasive. It often takes center stage during election campaigns (Collins 2000). Informants argue that even today, politicians campaign on a platform that promises to reform welfare. Sonya describes how politicians use this stereotype to cultivate votes:

> I have a very strong reaction to [the welfare mother stereotype]. Because number one, statistically that is not the case. Look back on the historical, political presidencies that have been won standing on the images of the black welfare mother. "I'm going to get rid of. I'm going to cut down on the number of welfare moms that are taking money from the country." And it's always a face of a black women.

Not all African-American women are on welfare, and people of other races and genders are also enrolled in the program. Nonetheless, these stigmatized women seem to remain the focus of the welfare debate (Hancock 2003).

Welfare mother and consumption. The welfare mother stereotype affects numerous aspects of African-American women's consumption decisions. First, African-American women who are on welfare are highly scrutinized by the public, with their consumption decisions intensely examined (Foster 2008). Such attention makes it

difficult for women who require financial assistance to ask for it. Informants report feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable using welfare services, because of the assumptions that service providers, as well as other customers, make about them. Shenelle notes:

> I'm not settling on being on welfare, because I do receive public assistance. I don't like it, I am embarrassed by that. Every day, every time I go grocery shopping, I'm embarrassed to pull out my Link card. It really does bother me.

This scrutiny and resulting embarrassment may even prevent some African-American women from seeking out the aid they need to better themselves.

Secondly, even African-American women who do not receive public assistance often confront this stereotype, especially in service encounters. Cameron describes times she faced stigmatization at a hospital and at a grocery store.

> When I was in the hospital when I was pregnant with my son… and the people came in and had me fill out my paperwork for being pregnant to get admitted. And the lady says, "Will you be using your medical card?" [She] just automatically assumed that since I was black and I was at the hospital, I would use a medical card. That I didn't have a private insurance, you know what I mean. Same thing being in line getting ready to pay for some groceries… I look ghetto and I got my kid and I got some other kids with me and we might be a little bit loud or something. The clerk would say "Will you be putting that on your Link card today?" Why

> would I be putting it on my Link card? I could have an American Express or a Visa. That one happens a lot, matter of fact.

In short, my informants note that the assumption that all African-American women receive public assistance makes them feel scrutinized and uncomfortable.

Problem Customer. In a 2001 study, Williams, Henderson, and Harris find that many African-Americans feel they are treated badly in the marketplace because of their race. For example, many of these individuals experience sales associates assuming that they are going to steal from the store. My informants echo this sentiment and find it outrageous and frustrating. Perhaps Charlotte sums it up the best, "My money isn't black or white. My money is green, like anybody else's."

The discomfort felt from the different treatment significantly affects African-American women's experiences during retail and service encounters. For example, informants note that because African-Americans are stereotyped as having access to fewer financial resources, restaurant workers assume they will not be generous tippers. Janet observes that when she goes to restaurants, she often does not get the best service, because it "seems like it is a foregone conclusion that that you are not going to tip. [The servers] are not going to profit by being nice to you. That is really hard." Furthermore, my informants believe that providers' perceptions result in African-Americans receiving poor service compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Teisha notes:

> A lot of servers automatically will give you half-ass service. If they see you are black or Asian… they aren't freakin' breaking their necks to refill your drinks. They aren't breaking their necks to see if you have everything you need. They aren't breaking their necks to make a check and see how

> your food is or to see if your steak is cooked okay. “I’m not doing all that because I know I ain't getting no money.” So that happens to me a lot at restaurants and stuff.

This discrimination not only can lead to negative perceptions of a particular service establishment among African-Americans, but can also result in lawsuits. For example, in 2004 Cracker Barrel faced several lawsuits which centered on accusations that the restaurant was deliberately seating Caucasian patrons ahead of African-American customers who had been waiting longer for service (Schmit and Larry Copeland 2004).

Beauty Stereotypes

Researchers find that Eurocentric ideals of beauty are not only prevalent, but also prized in western culture (Hooks 1993). Simply put, women are supposed to possess a light complexion, straight hair, and a thin figure. Taylor (2000) argues:

> A white dominated culture has racialized beauty… it has defined beauty per se as white beauty, in terms of the physical features that people we consider white are more likely to have…. Racialized standards of beauty reproduce the workings of racism by weaving racist assumptions into the daily practices… by encouraging them [African-American women] to accept and act on the supposition of their own ugliness (59).

The idea that “whiteness has come to be the defining zenith of physical attractiveness” forces African-American women to face the stereotype that they are unattractive and juxtaposes them against Caucasian women as the “other” (Shaw 2005, 143). African-

American women often struggle to either try to conform to these ideals or risk feeling that they are unappealing. Cameron says:

> Tall, thin, as light skinned as possible. Long hair, thin hair, European features. You know, smiling, happy. A lot of us, we don't look like that… And because we don't …, it makes us feel unhappy. It makes us feel like we aren't beautiful and we are not accepted.

Strikingly, in her collage, Sadie pasted half of an African-American woman's face next to half of a Caucasian woman's face to illustrate how African-American women do not conform to these western beauty ideals, and discusses this comparison as follows:

> I think that within the black community in particular, and you know with women also more so than men … straighter [hair] is seen as better, like more European hair style, straighter, wavy. Where your natural hair state for African American women is kinky; it's coarse, it's what is called nappy, that's the natural state... When it's straight, that's always seen as more neat or kept, more presentable the more straight hair style, more reminiscent to white women and Asian woman and stuff like that… I think the split picture is important because it shows like the differences that I'm trying to portray, as far as far as skin tone and hair.

Figure 4.1: Excerpt from Sadie's Collage

Informants hone in on three distinct dimensions of African-American women's looks that they believe conflict with Eurocentric beauty ideals: (1) hair, (2) skin tone, and (3) figure.

Hair. As Sadie's discussion above indicates, while Eurocentric beauty ideals mandate that hair be straight, African-American women's hair is often textured and less fine than their Caucasian counterparts (Thompson 2009). In fact, African-American women are often teased and bullied about their natural hair. African-American women's hair is often referred to as "kinky" and "nappy" and considered not as attractive as straight hair. In order to combat this beauty stereotype, many African-American women struggle to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards, despite the significant pain and monetary cost they incur to do so (Tate 2007; Thompson 2009). Cameron recounts:

> They say in order for us to be gorgeous, we have to be light skinned [with] long straight hair. That is why I put the curling iron on there [her collage]. Any black woman knows, it's hell. I have spent many, many years—I'm thirty years old—many years flat-ironing my hair, burning my hair. When I was in junior high, I dropped a curling iron on my eyeball and actually burned my eyeball. If beauty is hell, beauty is hell and more for a black woman.

Thompson (2009) finds that some African-American women associate the pain of straightening their hair with being a "real" woman. These women feel that in order to truly be feminine, they need to suffer through the process of straightening their hair. The comfort of having natural "nappy" hair is relegated to extremely young children and African-American men. Unfortunately, many African-American women view conforming to this particular beauty norm as necessary for survival, not just as a cosmetic decision. Patton (2006) finds that African-American women who keep their hair natural or in braids are often denied employment or are fired.

The stereotypes surrounding African-American women's hair can be traced back to slavery (Byrd and Tharps 2001). Prior to arriving in the United States, African women wore elaborate, intricate hair styles. Moreover, these women adorned their hair with decorative combs. When African women were brought to the United States and forced into slavery, they no longer had time to care for their hair. Intricate knots and braids became matted; head scarves and handkerchiefs replaced ornamental combs not only to protect the women from the harsh sun while working in the fields, but also to hide unkempt hair. During the 1700s, wigs became fashionable among wealthy Caucasians

(Banks 2000). Since African-American hair texture was different from Caucasian hair texture, the Caucasians considered it ugly. Some did not even consider it "real" hair and insultingly referred to it as "wool," in essence comparing African-Americans to sheep (Byrd and Tarps 2001). In order to cover up what they considered unattractive, Caucasian plantation owners ordered African-American slaves who worked inside the house to wear wigs.

After slavery was abolished, American society still attempted to force African-American women to conform to Eurocentric hair beauty ideals. Rooks (1996) finds that advertisements from the Reconstruction era started featuring before-and-after pictures of African-American women to illustrate how much more beautiful these women looked after adopting Caucasian beauty standards. Companies sold products to straighten and soften African-American hair so these women could assimilate into white society. This trend continues today. Several informants' collages feature advertisements for these products, and all but two spoke about trying these types of products, in order to kowtow to Eurocentric beauty standards. Many include advertisements for hair products on their collages. Below are excerpts from Marissa and Alison's collages.

Figure 4.2: Excerpt from Marissa's Collage

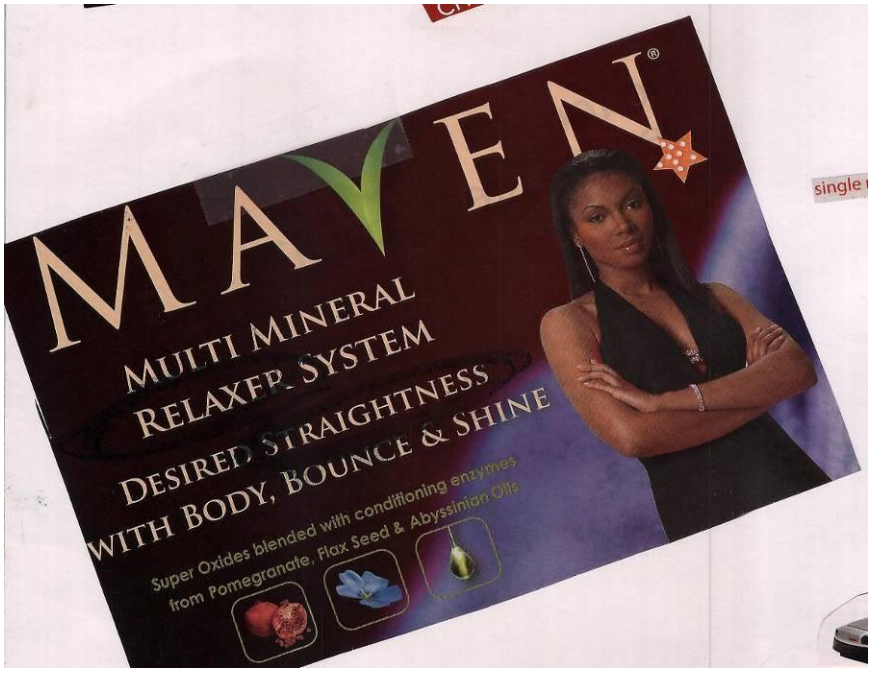


Figure 4.3: Excerpt from Alison's Collage

Both of these excerpts feature products designed to help African-American women fulfill Eurocentric hair beauty ideals by straightening their hair, reinforcing the idea that their own natural hair is not beautiful. Marissa elaborates:

> I constantly see advertisements for relaxers—have your hair straight, it's supposed to be long. I am actually going through a hair thing now, where I don't have a relaxer anymore. And I had one for twenty-five years, so it's really a struggle. That is why I have braids right now, because I can't deal with not having a relaxer. It's a complete lifestyle change. It really is, because you are constantly bombarded with, "Your hair has to be long and straight"… It's imposed on all [African-American] women.

These beauty ideals have given rise to African-American-run hair salons and other beauty businesses, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section. Ani (1994) argues that conforming to these beauty norms becomes a lifelong struggle that begins at a very early age. Several informants echo this sentiment. For example, Kaelynn says she has been treating her hair since she was eight, while Marianne notes:

> Well, as a kid, [my] hair was straightened. Because most African-Americans, we have naturally curly hair. It kinks up, curls up, knots up, whatever you want to call it. My mom decided she wanted to straighten [my] hair out.

For African-American females, the first time they straighten their hair as young children can be seen as a rite of passage (Aduonum 2004). Unfortunately, this particular rite perpetuates the stereotype that they must change their natural hair to be considered beautiful.

Skin. Westernized standards of beauty prize lighter skin over darker skin (Hill 2002). Sadie argues:

> I think skin tone has always been an issue. You know, whether you are a darker skin tone or a lighter skin tone. What's more acceptable or what's more likeable, I guess. And it's always been seen that lighter is better and darker is not.

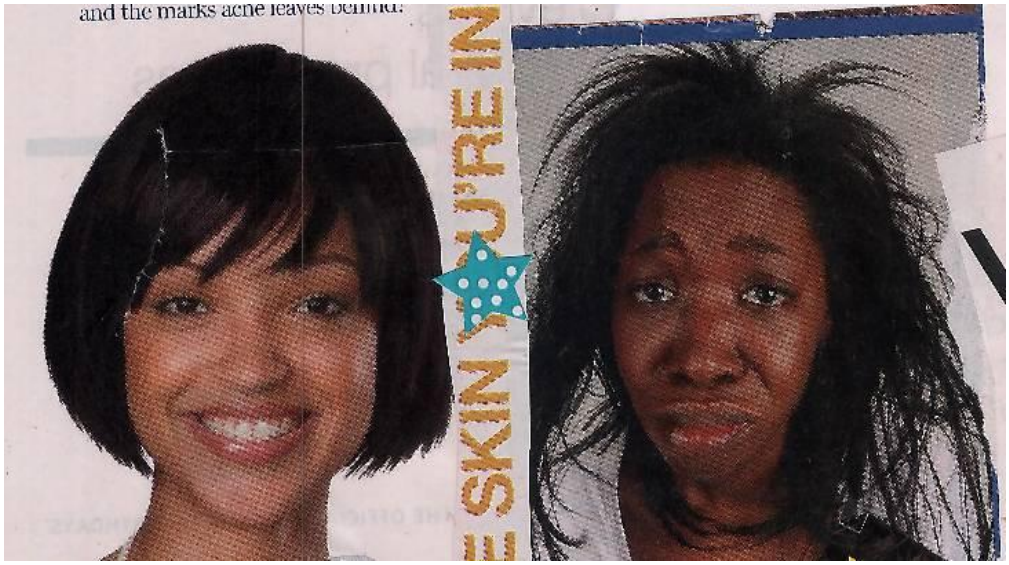
This stereotype dates back centuries, when wealthier Caucasian women prized pale skin as a symbol of affluence (Collins 2000). These women did not have to work in the fields, a situation that would lead to tanned or freckled skin. Furthermore, when Caucasians and African-Americans had children together, their children often possessed lighter skin than their African-American parent. These children were considered more beautiful by society than this parent because they more closely resembled Caucasians. Society believed that the lighter skin an African-American possessed, the more Caucasian ancestry in their lineage—which made these people more socially acceptable than those with a perceived ancestry less Caucasian in composition. Even among African-Americans, this stereotype that darker skin on African-American women is less attractive than lighter skin endures. Sherry says:

> This [stereotype] carries a negative [connotation], saying that black women are lazy, they are unattractive and overweight. This is supposed to be and this is what you hear, this is ugly and unattractive. Because her skin is dark and her hair is natural. This black woman has lighter skin and straighter hair, she would be considered one of the most beautiful women on this picture.

Several informants make direct comparisons between lighter skinned and darker skinned women on their collages. Cameron even put two faces together to discuss how the lighter skinned woman would be considered more attractive:

> The very first thing that drew my eye and I thought was very, very important was these two images right here. One here is a light-skinned girl with the European-type features. The sharp nose and light skin and the straight hair. And right next to it is a woman that's opposite. She's dark-skinned and she has a big nose and big lips… Another thing to mention is the light-skinned girl looks happy and the dark-skinned girl looks unhappy and her hair is a mess and her nose is big. And I put this down, because this, I believe, is the true essence of being a black woman in America. I believe it describes it. It's a constant battle to look like what a woman is supposed to.

Figure 4.4: Excerpt from Cameron's Collage



Furthermore, in mainstream society, skin tone historically decided more than just what was considered aesthetically pleasing. In the 1900s, African-Americans were subjected to the paper bag test by society (Russell, Wilson, and Hall 2002). If a black person's skin was darker than a paper bag, he or she was restricted in terms of societal access. For example, certain churches and restaurants were off limits to them. While these legal restrictions no longer exist, informants observe that the distinction remains. Kaelynn recounts:

> If you are lighter it is seen that you are better than a darker-skinned African American. My mother grew up with what they called the paper bag test. If you were as light as a paper bag then you were okay. If you were darker than a paper bag you were just like ew, you know. You were looked down upon. And that is still going on. I know so many people who are darker skinned and almost, oh she's cute for a dark, she is cute to be dark skinned. You will hear that.

This stereotype still exerts immediate effects on the consumption habits of some African-American women. For example, some purchase skin-lightening creams despite the fact that using these products can be dangerous to their health. Alison notes:

> I had a friend, I didn't know how dark she was until she got pregnant. Because she was using [a skin-whitening cream] all over, which is really bad for you. It's only supposed to be for lightening spots. But people use it on their whole face. And she got pregnant and I guess she couldn't use it and she got really dark. And then she stopped using it. And she had a

> problem with her skin color, because people teased her… It is a bleaching cream. So you don't want to put it all over your face and your body.

Overall, not only are African-American women treated as less beautiful because their skin tones do not coincide with Eurocentric beauty ideals, but companies also sell products to bleach or lighten skin color. These products are damaging not only to African-American women's sense of worth, but can also be potentially dangerous for their health.

Figure/weight. Scholars argue that African-American women are often portrayed as overweight and unhealthy (Shaw 2005). One informant, Sherry, says "this carries a negative saying that black women are lazy, they are unattractive and overweight." According to contemporary Westernized beauty ideals, the fuller figure is considered unfeminine. This image is constantly reinforced through the media in advertising, movies, and television (Collins 2000; Shaw 2005). Cameron's collage features a comparison of a Caucasian woman and an African-American woman:

> We have a picture here of a white woman on the left who has blonde hair, blue eyes and her skin is sun kissed. She's dressed up. And this is the girl that starred in the movie *Precious* [Gabourey Sidibe]. You know? And she is dark and she's big and she's round and she doesn't have features. It's kind of like a losing battle. If you come into the world like this you don't have a chance. There is nothing else you can do to fix yourself if you look like this.

Another informant, Paige, describes how this stereotype has endured throughout American history from the time of slavery and has been perpetuated through the media ever since.

> I find, something that I struggle with is the fact that there are a lot of negative stereotypes about bigger black women. Some of that predates back to the slave times the idea of the Mammy character. Not a character, but Mammy figure. That caretaker, that role model. That is something that women tend to gravitate towards naturally. Look in the media. A lot of women, especially larger women, are typecast as the caregiver. But not just the caregiver but that is their role and that is always going to be their role. And that's the role they are kind of typecast into.

This image, beginning with the Mammy character in the movie *Gone with the Wind* (1939), serves "as the physical embodiment of features rejected by Western beauty criteria," (Shaw 2005, 146). Shaw (2005) goes on to note that "Mammy becomes a shadow against which white women's beauty may be contrasted. Her fleshy body specifically reinforces the patriarchy's insistence upon female slenderness and delicacy" (146). According to Eurocentric beauty ideals, if being slender and thin is attractive, than being full figured is unsightly.

Additionally, current fashions often conform to Westernized beauty norms, making it difficult for many African-American women to find fashionable clothing that flatters them (Robertson 1995). These consumption limitations add to their feelings of unattractiveness. One informant notes:

> If we are battling with our hair, we are battling with our shape. We are curvy, we have big butts. I know white women sometimes have big boobs. But we have hips, and butts, and chests and all that kind of stuff like that. We never can find anything to wear. We go to the mall. The mall is designed for the teeny bopper, European girl. You know what I mean? Aeropostale, and Forever 21, and Old Navy, you know. We can put on the jeans and they don't fit. We have big thighs. We got big thighs and small hips, so the jeans don't fit our thighs. But if they did fit our thighs, the hip part is too big. So it's a constant battle to find clothes that fit us correctly. We can't, it's terrible.

This stereotype can exert pressure on African-American women to lose weight (Williamson 2010). This can be difficult as a higher percentage of African-Americans live in urban areas where healthy food choices are more limited than in suburban or rural areas (Lewis et al. 2005). It is particularly difficult to find fresh fruits and vegetables in urban areas.

Interpersonal Relationship Stereotypes

Beyond physical appearance, African-American women face stigmatization in their interpersonal relationships. One of the most prominent and enduring stereotypes they face is the angry black woman. African-American women are thought to be loud and aggressive (Collins 2000). This stereotype especially affects their interracial personal relationships (Childs 2005). Sadie says:

> I think the first thing that comes to mind is that they are always angry. I think that's definitely, you have probably heard that before... I know there

> is a movie called, *The Diary of an Angry Mad Black Women*, or something, just that we are angry or in defense of something.

Similarly, Marissa notes:

> Because I think the black women's attitude plays against us. Like everyone is expecting us to blow up at any given time. It goes even beyond like a women and her period. It's like black women's attitude is like you are constantly on your period.

Because of this stereotype, other races may find African-American women intimidating (Childs 2005). Paige argues that when African-American women are powerful and assertive, they are stereotyped as angry black women; however, they need to possess these traits in order to combat other obstacles they face as African-American women. Thus, this perceived personality trait becomes a double-edged sword. Paige notes:

> Being strong, and powerful and smart and articulate and assertive are good things… those same words oftentimes used as accolades are sometimes used to keep women down. So you get this typecast of being the strong, black angry women. That is a stereotype of women who are strong or powerful or assertive, but you have to be in order to get ahead. In a lot of fields where there are so many obstacles that are coming against you, so many things are fighting to keep you down.

Unfortunately, this stereotype can affect the working environment for African-American women (Bell 1990). Some believe they may not be taken seriously when they

bring up issues in the workplace because people believe they are just generally angry and bitter. Furthermore, other African-American women who have had to manage such perceptions over the course of a career may not speak up at work because they do not want to be associated with this stereotype. Jennifer discusses how this stereotype is prevalent in her professional life.

> One of the things I have always been conscious of, and it's sometimes I get upset with myself, [is] I don't get angry. You know there is still the stereotype of the angry black women. And so I try not to raise my voice when I'm in the presence of white people. Even if I get mad about something. So even if I get upset I should have gone off on some of my colleagues... But that was one thing I was always conscious about. Always smiling, trying not to come off angry at something. Because that is the stereotype of the black women, always angry about something. So that is one thing that I notice that I do from time to time… It was like okay, let me be nice, let me be quiet. Let me not express my anger or whatever. Just shut up. But that is always an issue. Don't want to come across as an angry black woman.

Issues associated with this stereotype contribute to the discrimination that African-American women face in the workplace. Other relationship stereotypes include the single mother and promiscuous Jezebel/gold-diggers, discussed previously. Many of the ways that African-American women cope with interpersonal relationship stereotypes involve consumption, a negotiation I will discuss in greater detail in the next section. (See appendix for a summary of the stereotype categories and additional quotes.)

STEREOTYPES AND IDENTITY (RESEARCH QUESTION 3)

In this section I discuss the question of how stereotypes affect African-American women's identities. An obvious but nonetheless salient point about stereotypes is that they do not fit everyone to whom they are assigned. By definition, stereotypes overgeneralize and fail to take into account a person's individual attributes, which may render them inaccurate. For example, one informant, Janet, argues that not only is the stereotype of the uncultured and uneducated African-American incorrect, but that this attribute can easily be applied to any number of people who are not African-American.

> I think there are stereotypes about African-Americans as far as not being able to understand or appreciate theatre or classical music. I think there are negative stereotypes when it comes to things like that. It's true for some people. I think any time you stereotype and assume things you are just being so close-minded, because there are people of all colors that fit any description. There is not one thing that is totally indicative to African-Americans or totally indicative to Caucasians or Asians or anybody else. You can find stupid in every color.

This section explores how the race and gender stereotypes discussed in the previous section affect identity. Previous research shows that stigmatized individuals may internalize stereotypes, which can then become part of their identity (Cottle 1994). In cases such as these, the stereotyped person can strengthen the influence of the stigma by

embodying it and thereby giving it legitimacy, a process known as "stereotype threat" (Steele and Aronson 1995). However, none of my informants believe they personify any of the stereotypes society ascribes to them. In fact, if they exhibit any characteristics of one of the stereotypes, they quickly provide reasons why they are *not* an example of that particular stereotype. For example, Shenelle is a young single mother on public assistance, but she vehemently argues that she does not fit the stereotypical image of a single mother taking advantage of welfare programs. She lists reasons why she does not fit this stereotype, despite embodying several of the characteristics:

> Not every black woman is a single mom. And not every black woman [fits] the stereotype that we take advantage of the welfare system. [Like] we are all on welfare and we never want to get off of it… [or] we are not ambitious and we don't want to try to do better for ourselves. [Or] we don't want to get educated. That we will settle for what we have and that is it. Being poor, being on welfare, being a statistic… I have a five year old. And I am still maintaining my relationship with the father of my child. So I'm not one of those women who just got knocked up by somebody and whatever, I don't care. No, I do care and I am trying to break the stereotype.

Another informant, Sonya, takes this point a step further, arguing that neither she nor the African-American women she knows fit this stereotype:

> I'm sorry but that's not cool. And that's [the welfare mother stereotype] not the truth. It's disgusting to me because there are a lot of hard-working black women, trying to take care of their children. Trying to raise them up,

> try to make sure that the members of their community are taken care of. So really what it does is that it downgrades the amount of work and time and investment that black women have in their communities and children in the world…we live in. I mean, a lot of people giving back. It also portrays an image of being lazy. That's not the case. Those aren't women I know.

If these African-American women actively reject the stereotypes society attempts to impose on them, how do these stereotypes actually affect their identity? The concept of identity is complex and multidimensional. As discussed previously, according to the Communication Theory of Identity, there are four frames of identity: (1) personal, (2) enacted, (3) relational, and (4) communal, which are interrelated and mutually construct each other (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993). However, different discourses govern the norms and expectations of the different identity frames, creating discrepancies among them and resulting in identity gaps (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993; Jung and Hecht 2004). Previous literature identifies eleven identity gaps (six between any two frames, four among any three, and one among all four; for more detail see Chapter 2) (Hecht 1993; Hecht et al. 1993). It is important to note that every gap identified by Hecht et al. is an ***inter***-frame gap, occurring *between* identity frames. I will later expand identity gap theory and introduce the concept of ***intra***-frame gaps. These gaps occur *within* one identity frame. For example, within the personal identity frame individuals might possess two conflicting identities. This new gap is an important contribution to identity theory and consumer behavior because the mechanisms for coping with intra-frame gaps can be different and more complex than those for inter-frame gaps.

Personal-Communal Identity Gap

As stated, African-American women often do not believe that stereotypes apply to them. In other words, the identity society ascribes to them differs from their self-conceptions. Marissa says:

> [This is] the struggle that I feel every day. It could be a self-imposed struggle or it could be real. But I perceive it as how I think of myself and who I feel like I really am and how people see me... You're expected to be diva-licious and have the weave in your hair and have the attitude. And I'm, I can be like that, but that isn't who I am as a person.

Marissa's statement illustrates a personal-communal identity gap. The personal identity frame refers to how individuals subjectively view themselves—who they believe they are as people—whereas the communal identity frame is the identity ascribed to people based on their group membership (Hecht 1993). Specifically, Marissa feels the communal identity society ascribes to her based on her race and gender is different from how she views herself—her personal identity frame. This identity gap is also evident in Marissa's collage, pictured below:

Figure 4.5: Marissa's Collage

Stigmatized attributes, including race and gender, often fall into the communal category because stereotypes are typically based on these group memberships. Despite being given no instructions on how to arrange her collage, Marissa divides it into two sections: (1) How the World Sees Me (Or Wants to See Me) and (2) Me. The left side represents the communal identity society ascribes to her, while the right side is her personal identity frame. These two sections clearly reveal the conflict between her two identity frames. For example, the women on the communal identity side have processed hair and are wearing a significant amount of makeup. These women conform to Euro-centric beauty ideals. Conversely, on her personal identity side, Marissa places the phrase "Natural World." This phrase, among other things, refers to embracing one's own natural beauty, rejecting the idea that one has to kowtow to westernized beauty ideals in order to be

beautiful. As previously discussed, the concept of identity gaps was emergent within the data. It is actually this collage and the accompanying quote that first drew my attention to the theoretical discussions of identity conflict. I subsequently reviewed the identity literature and realized the salience of the Communication Theory of Identity to my work. Interestingly, Marissa's personal identity is characterized by few components of conspicuous consumption, with the exception of the high heels that she indicates make her feel sexy. However, the side of her collage reflecting the communal identity she believes society expects her to enact is consumption-laden, and features conspicuous consumption choices that society expects.

Likewise, Shirley discusses how the angry black woman stereotype is not how she views herself:

> I think the angry black woman stereotype is very typical nowadays… it's just the angry black bitter woman thing going on. Black women are angry and bitter. That's a generalization to me... It seems that I am perceived as being for lack of a better term, less than I really am.

In general, the stereotypes society ascribes to African-American women conflict with the personal identity frames of these particular women, creating an identity gap. Identity gaps also engender feelings of perceived discrimination, which can result in feelings of depression (Wadsworth, Hecht, and Jung 2008). Although this distinction is never specifically stated in the literature, I argue here that the Personal-Communal Identity Gap represents a tug-of-war between a person's internal and external identity. While personal identity reflects how individuals view or define themselves, people's communal identities are imposed on them externally by society. As a result, individuals exercise much less

control over the communal identity ascribed to them than the personal identity they assign to themselves. Overall, my informants argue that the communal identities imposed on them via stereotypes are not accurate. The discourse that constructs their communal identity contradicts their personal identity. It is this contradiction that leads to an inter-frame identity gap.

A New Emergent Gap—Communal Identities Gap

While Hecht (1993) and Hecht et al. (1993) explore inter-frame identity gaps, they fail to consider ***intra***-frame identity gaps. The informants for this study note that intra-frame identity gaps can be just as (if not more) problematic than inter-frame identity gaps. Specifically, informants argue that they are often subjected to two opposing communal identities—one by mainstream society and the other by the African-American community. One of the major intra-frame identity gaps that emerges multiple times in my text is the debate over African-American women's hair. As previously discussed, Eurocentric beauty ideals mandate that hair be straight and flowing. However, African-American women's hair is often textured and less fine than Caucasian counterparts'. These differences makes it difficult, not to mention time-consuming, expensive, and often painful, to comply with Eurocentric beauty standards (Thompson 2009). Sadie notes "[these beauty standards] make me feel like you can't be yourself... And I kind of feel like it's forcing black women to kind of assimilate to society… I don't think it's a good thing."

Taylor (2000) argues that African-American women can reduce the dominance of this stereotype by embracing their natural hair. However, wearing it naturally can be seen as an aggressive act towards the majority (Banks 2000). In short, African-American

women who do not conform to these Eurocentric beauty ideals are viewed as defiant of Caucasian/majority norms. Jennifer notes:

> For years I used to wear my hair, well in braids because it is very convenient. But I noticed people responded better to you if you had something flowing. This is seen as a stigma. If you are a black women with natural hair, it automatically says you are militant. You are anti-white or whatever.

The anti-white stereotype associated with African-American natural hair styles is primarily due to the fact that during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, these hair styles—and the afro in particular—became a symbol of political change (Weekes 1997). Thus, African-American women face a Catch-22 with respect to stereotypes associated with their hair. If they do not want to embrace Eurocentric beauty ideals, they must then contend with an additional stereotype—that their natural hair might be interpreted as a sign of resistance or revolt.

With regard to the intra-frame identity gap, some African-American women feel that other African-American women who wear their hair naturally stigmatize those who do not follow this hairstyle. Teisha notes, "The black women [who] go natural tend to look down on the processed hair… Because they say we are trying to be like the white woman." In this example, Teisha reveals the intra-frame communal identity gap that African-American women face. On one side, if they straighten or perm their hair in accordance with Euro-centric beauty norms, they are accused of trying to be white, whether this goal is true or not. Yet if they wear their hair naturally, not only is this action

seen as less attractive by society at large, but it can also be seen as militant and anti-white. Thus, these women must deal with conflicting communal identities.

Similarly, as discussed, there is a stereotype of being unsuccessful and on welfare. However, among African-American women, there is also a stigma attached to success. Cameron notes:

> You actually feel the need to suppress [your success] a little bit when we get around our family and our peers and other black people. They kind of look at us like we are being uppity or like we think we know more than them, or that we think we are better than them. So you downplay it a lot. Like if I'm around my family, I won't really go to them and say, "Hey, I got accepted into grad school and I'm doing this. Hey, I got this job." People are like blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, "You think you are white now." Or something like that, you know what I mean? So you kind of minimize it. You only try to talk to people who are cool with it and on your level, and understand what you are going through.

Thus, for African-American women, it often seems they cannot escape stigmatization from inside and outside their own race and gender. If they do not achieve success—and sometimes even when they do—society labels them as welfare queens. However, if they succeed and achieve upward social mobility, the African-American community can react negatively. Consequently, African-American women who achieve upward social mobility often feel misunderstood and alienated from their families and communities (Baker 1989). This perception can make it difficult for upwardly mobile consumers to identify

with their community, which can lead to them to suppress their achievements, as reflected in the above quote that reveals estrangement. Amelia says:

> We have enough information and knowledge to basically pick ourselves up by the bootstraps and do our own thing, but for some reason we are like a bucket of crabs. Every time one jumps up, there's one at the bottom trying to pull you back down. We're our own worst enemy. I'm going to tell you the truth right now – we're our own worst enemy, because we're just a lot of haters. A lot of us are haters. We get mad and jealous when one person is doing better than another. We go about manipulating a scheme to try to bring that person back down. So I think we are our own worst enemy, I really do.

These women must learn to cope with stigmatization coming from all sides – e.g., the stereotypes that society ascribes as well as those from the African-American community. Clearly, for African-American women the communal identity gap can be one of the hardest of all gaps to manage. Elise's comments encapsulate this divide:

> It's not necessarily from non-black people imposing these [stereotypes] on the black community. It also can happen within [the black community]… I didn't expect that. I think that requires a different level of resilience… I think that for black people, they have a belief there's one way to be black. If you don't eat these same foods, obviously you don't get it. The way you talk, the way you dress, the music you listen to, it's sort of code or something. And you don't know what that is, you don't fit in there…

> [they] can't be black or have to prove they're black enough… People think if you are getting good grades, you are acting white. And nobody wants to do that. All it does is end up reinforcing a stereotype [that] we are not smart, and we aren't good students. We don't want to do well… If you realize I'm not good at basketball, but frankly calculus is my thing, that should be okay. That should be perfectly okay if you want to be in Math Club and not feel like you are betraying your race.

It is important to understand that the concept of identity gaps is emergent to this research. As such, most of the data focuses around the personal-communal and the communal identity gaps. Since stereotypes are identities externally ascribed to individuals from society, it makes sense that the gaps that emerge revolve around the communal identity frame. Furthermore, while an enacted-communal identity gap is plausible and even probable, most of the informants rely on enacted identity more as a coping strategy. They do this because it is similar to personal identity in that it is decided internally. This fact results in individuals having more control over this identity than other external identities, which will be discussed in greater detail below. (See appendix for a summary of the emergent identity gaps and additional quotes.)

MANAGING THE GAP (RESEARCH QUESTIONS 4 & 5)

In this section, I will unpack the last two research questions: 1) How do African-American women manage race and gender stigmas? and 2) Specifically, how do African-

American women use consumption to manage these stigmas? These two research questions are related in that both are about stigma management, resulting in an underlying common mechanism that governs this behavior.

As discussed previously, the four frames of identity are governed by very different discourses. Through my research, I find the personal and enacted frames are internal, meaning that an individual decides these two frames for him or herself. People determine who they think they are and how they want to communicate that identity to others. Conversely, the relational and communal identity frames are both external. The relational frame depends on who the people around a person think he or she is, while the communal frame is based on the identity society as a whole ascribes to the individual. Both of these identity frames are determined by others and attributed to the person.

Table 4.1: Internal and External Identity Frames

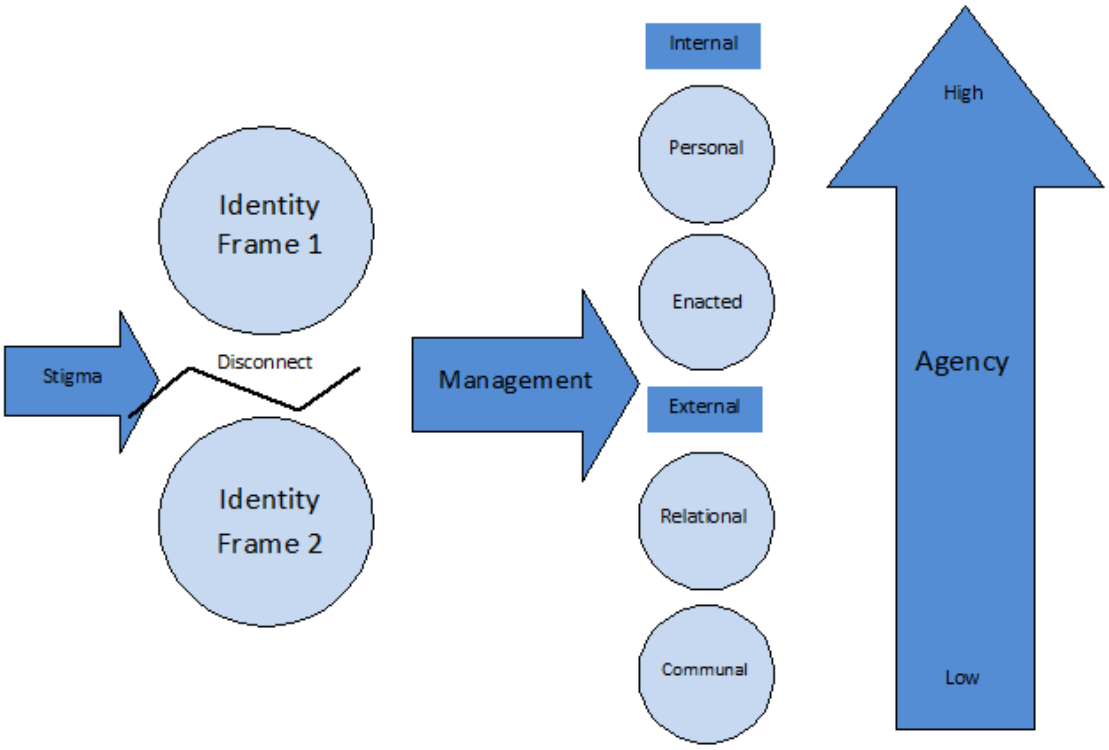
Internal	**External**
Personal	Relational
Enacted	Communal

Furthermore, the internal and external nature of the identity frames result in individuals possessing different levels of agency over the various frames. Agency allows people the freedom to have influence over their lives (Bandura 1997, 2001). Moreover, Bandura argues that sociocultural factors, such as social contexts, directly affect how much agency individuals possess. I posit that the amount of agency people hold over any one particular identity frame lies on a continuum. Individuals possess the most agency over their personal identity frames. By its very nature, there are very few restrictions over

one's self-definition. Individuals have slightly less agency over their enacted identity frame. For example, they may be constrained by resources, either physical or personal. Continuing on the spectrum, people possess even less agency over their relational identity, which is determined by those around the individual. While the person may exert some influence over this frame through how he or she interacts with others, in the end the totality of this identity is outside of the individual's direct control. Lastly, people exert the least amount of agency over their communal frame of identity as this identity is assigned by society as a whole. As previously discussed, an example of a communal identity is a stereotype. Witteborn (2004) argues that stigmas are the result of communal discourse. In other words, stigmas arise from societal feelings toward and communication regarding a particular attribute. Furthermore, Link and Phelan (2001) note that stereotypes are historically bound and difficult to change. When change does occur, it typically occurs slowly and through the efforts of many people (such as during the Civil Rights Movement), not by an individual trying to change the communal identity ascribed to him or her.

Overall, these identity frames together construct an individual's identity. When two identity frames contradict each other, a disconnect occurs. The individual must then decide whether and how to cope with the identity gap. She can attempt to manipulate the other frames of identity in order to manage the disconnect. In table 4.2 I present my theoretical model:

Table 4.2: Identity Gap Management



This model shows that another construct, like stigma, can cause a disconnect between two of the identity frames. More specifically in the case of this dissertation, stigma can cause the communal identity frame to contradict an individual's personal identity frame. In order to eliminate or at least reduce the identity gap, the individual can attempt to manipulate one or more of the four frames of identity. By doing so, he or she affects either or both of the two frames causing the disconnect. Alternatively, people can manipulate their identity in order to combat the discourse or construct causing the disconnect (in this case, using one of their identity frames to eliminate the stigma, thereby eradicating the identity gap). The amount of agency people can exert over the frame they

attempt to manipulate determines how difficult it is reduce the gap and how successful they are in managing the identity gap. While I will discuss the manipulation of all four identity frames, I will concentrate on discussing strategies associated with the enacted identity frame, since these are the most consumption-laden of the four that Hecht et al. (1993) identify.

Personal Identity Frame Strategies

One way to eliminate the identity gap is to simply accept the stereotype. As previously discussed, this process is known as "stereotype threat" (Steele and Aronson 1995). With stereotype threat, the existence of the ascribed communal identity actually results in its internalization into the personal identity frame. The communal and personal identity frames mutually reinforce the stereotype. This idea is similar to the concept of sexual scripts I discussed earlier. Jung and Hecht (2004) find a stereotype can also permeate the enacted identity frame, as the personal and communal acceptance of the stigma will influence how the individual communicates his or her identity, as well. This outcome is a real hazard, because the individual exerts the most agency over this identity frame. As none of my informants feel that they fit the stereotypes, they do not succumb to stereotype threat. However, Shenelle discusses how the prevalence of the gold digger stereotype, especially in the media, makes it hard to resist. She says:

> It has made me think about, as a twenty-seven year old black woman who's not married yet, would it be easier to get with a man that's a NBA basketball player. Should I one day come into some money, fly out to Miami and go to the games and see if I can make one of them my husband. So yeah, I do think through media and by the way they are

> depicted on reality TV shows, I think it can make some of us women who aren't married and who are single parents and can't really maintain our relationships want to try. To see if we can be the lucky winner and have a man take care of us and all the promises on the way. We will be rich and stay-at-home moms and don't have to worry about nothing, but getting plastic surgery and looking beautiful every day. So yeah… make[s] me think.

Other informants discuss other African-American women they know who did fall into a stereotype, particularly that of the welfare mother. This coping strategy for the identity gap is one of the biggest dangers of stereotypes and is difficult to combat. In the case of negative stereotypes (the focus of this dissertation), this strategy is obviously not a desirable outcome. However, if the context were different, it may prove to be a perfectly acceptable management strategy. For example, if an individual thinks negatively about him or herself, while society ascribes a positive identity, it may help the person's self-esteem to accept the communal identity and change his or her personal identity frame to match it.

While consumption is not generally used as a management strategy when manipulating this identity frame, it can be used to facilitate the process. For example, in Shenelle's quote above, she mentions that if she came into money, she could travel to Florida and go to basketball games in order to find a rich husband. By attending this consumption experience, she would be more likely to be able to fulfill the stereotype. This strategy is not about changing the enacted identity to attract the rich husband, but rather about placing oneself in the circumstances surrounding the stereotype. It is also

important to note that while it is relatively easy for the individual to exert control over this identity frame, it is not the most effective way to combat stigma. It does not attempt to change or even distance the person from the stereotype or the communal identity.

Communal Identity Frame Strategies

People can attempt to relieve their identity gap through the communal frame. However, it is important to note that individuals possess the least amount of agency over this frame; therefore, it is very difficult to alter. Furthermore, in order to change this frame to effectively manage an identity gap, multiple people must work on changing the stereotype. An example would be the collective action strategy that Scaraboto and Fischer (2009) describe in their study of the fat acceptance movement, where people band together to change society's perceptions of being overweight. This strategy also emerged during the Civil Rights movement, where African-Americans strove (and in part succeeded) to show American society that they were equal to Caucasians. Marianne argues it is difficult to change society's perceptions and stereotypes. But she also points out that individuals can make society's perceptions worse by falling victim to stereotype threat, and that the best way to effect real change is through changing the communal identity:

> Will prejudice ever leave this world? I don't think so. Can you change it? I don't think so. You can make it worse. Do you have to accept it? No, you don't. You can find a reasonable way to deal with it. You can stop having the negativity saying, "I can't be what I want to be. I can't go where I want to go, because I'm black." You cannot do it. You can look back in history and at African-Americans. Look at Rosa Parks and Martin Luther

> King who did something about making a change. You have to be willing to make the change.

Changing the communal identity is difficult and society has not seen a significant collective action since the Civil Right movement more than thirty years ago. Even the Fat Acceptance Movement is nowhere near as large (or influential) as the Civil Rights movement. The closest society has seen to the Civil Rights movement in recent years is the Gay Marriage Rights movement, where homosexuals are attempting to disprove the stereotype that they are sexually promiscuous. One of the ways they are accomplishing this is through campaigning for the government to legally recognize their longstanding relationships. Amelia notes that the African-American community needs to rally in the same manner it did during the Civil Rights movement. She also asserts that it needs to do so on the local level as well.

> I think we are our own worst enemy. I really do. And you know, we don't have any leaders anymore, like Jesse Jackson and Martin Luther King. Those types of people, we don't have those type of people anymore. We used to have protests and do sit-ins. You know things like that, so our children are lost. They don't have any representation. Any mentors to look up to. I want to be just like them. Of course we have a black president, that's excellent, wonderful, but that is neither here nor there. I think we need more leaders in our communities. Not at the White House, but in our communities.

Effecting change in the community may be easier than at the national level. For one informant, Paige, working as an assistant program director allows her both to celebrate African-American culture and also to educate the larger community.

> I do programs and activities that celebrate, recognize, and explore African-American identity and African-American cultural experience and encourage others to come in and participate and explore that as well. I also do community outreach… It is very exciting. I spend time creating programs that teach the entire university community about the African-American experience.

This type of program helps combat stereotypes at the local level and may be easier to organize than programs at the national level. Moreover, if enough communities hold these programs and market them effectively, these actions can make significant changes. Initiatives that work to combat the communal identity as a whole (provided they succeed) may be more effective in combating stereotypes than other individual solutions. While changing the communal identity frame is difficult because of an individual's lack of agency over that particular frame, when successful it is one of the most effective ways of managing the identity gap. It not only changes one of the frames that is causing the identity conflict, but it also directly targets the construct (in this case, stigma) that causes the disconnect. Similar to the personal identity frame, consumption is not the main focus of this management strategy. However it can be a part of the strategy through specific programs and media, such as those Paige describes above.

Relational Identity Frame Strategies

Manipulating the relational identity frame is difficult. It is often even harder to manipulate than the communal frame. Even though people have more control over their relational identity frame than their communal one, the sheer number of people who can join in a collective action to change the communal identity makes a significant difference. It is difficult to change how the people around an individual view that person without changes in either her communal or enacted frame. The dominant strategy that informants discuss is that sometimes they simply have to wait until people get to know them before they stop stereotyping that individual. Marianne says:

> If I'm not willing to get to know you, not the color of your skin, but you as the person, see beyond your skin and the beautiful person that you are, then I'm always going to have a problem with you and you are always going to have a problem with me. But people, they judge the outward appearance… I think this is the problem with the world stereotyping, we don't know one another and we don't try to get to know one another. We just base things on things that we learned coming up or something we heard or something someone told us, instead of finding a way to get to know people.

While this strategy may work in some cases, it is not always possible for individuals to get to know every person who may stereotype them. Furthermore, in some cases, an individual might not have the time to get to know the person stereotyping him or her because of the short duration of the encounter (e.g., during a job interview). Additionally, the stereotype itself can stand in the way of people wanting to get to know the individual.

Overall, not only is it difficult to enact this strategy, it is not as effective at eliminating the identity gap due to the sheer number of people who buy into the stereotypes. Informants do not discuss consumption strategies for manipulating this identity frame, although some use a combination of relational and enacted identity strategies that involve consumption, which I will discuss in the next section.

Enacted Identity Frame Strategies

Obviously, consumption can be utilized to communicate and symbolize aspects of identity (Belk et al. 1989). Furthermore, when identity becomes unstable, as it does when an identity gap occurs, the role of consumption in reformatting identity increases dramatically (Mehta and Belk 1991). Additionally, people can use consumption to alleviate stigma (Neves 2004). For example, Jennifer describes a stereotype that she faced, particularly in the workplace.

> I noticed people responded better to you if you had something flowing [as opposed to having natural hair]. [Natural hair] is seen as a stigma. If you are a black women with natural hair, it automatically says you are militant. You are anti-white or whatever.

Jennifer goes on to describe how she altered her consumption to escape this stereotype:

> I know years ago when I was looking for certain jobs they would say, "You should get a perm. You don't want to intimidate people." So yes, there was a time I use to wear my hair a certain way not to be intimidating.

Jennifer is using consumption to distance herself from the communal identity of being militant by changing that attribute. Over the course of several minutes in her interview, another informant, Teisha, explains that the reason she is participating in this research

study is to be able to afford to perm her hair for a job interview, repeatedly stressing how important it is for her. She says:

> Like today I need a perm. I can't even show my hair. That's why I'm here today. Because I've needed a perm for two days and I'm like, "I can take that twenty bucks and buy a perm … When I leave here I am going to get my perm and do it before I go to my interview." I would have scheduled my interview for a couple of days away, had I not already set this up to make that twenty dollars. That is how important it is. You understand? That's why I'm putting so many stars [on the image for the hair treatment]. It's that serious. I mean I could probably slick my hair back in a ponytail enough so the interview lady wouldn't think twice about it. She probably wouldn't even notice. But I can't do it... I'll notice. And if I don't get the job then I'll think it's because of my hair. I know I will. If I don't go get my hair done and I don't get the job, I'll be, "Oh my God, it had to be my hair. I don't know, she didn't like the way I looked." And this is very important to me too.

Similarly to Jennifer and Teisha, Sherry changes her hair for her job interview. However, she returns to her natural hair after she has been in the job for a period of time. This is an interesting example in that Sherry changes her enacted identity to give people a chance to get to know her as a person (a relational identity strategy). She says:

> I have always, and this is bad, but I have always gone into an interview with my hair straight… because for some reason, well first impressions are lasting impressions. And I would prefer to not distract them with my hair.

> I have walked in on [a job] interview where I was one of the interviewers... And they were so focused on someone's hair or nails or little things, that they actually weren't listening to what the person was saying. So it's easier, sometimes I guess it's shocking for people for my hair to be natural. So it's easier to just do the straight thing [since] that's what they are used to seeing. And then once they have gotten to know me and they know me, I can go ahead and do [natural hair].

Other informants discuss wearing a wig to job interviews for many of the same reasons. Sherry goes on to discuss how having to use this strategy affects her psychologically:

> It hurts, it hurts. It doesn't feel good at all. It's really weird. And to some extent it feels like I'm misleading someone. But in reality it is sad that I have to go through all of that. I would prefer to be in a place that I did not have to … I don't want to give anybody else any other reason to pick at something that is not as important. Rather than, "Here is my work. This is the type of employee that I am, let's focus on that"… I think people take it back to the Black Panther party, that you are this bold, radical, unruly person that's never going to listen. Every negative stereotype you could possibly think of a black women times ten, when your hair is natural.

Unfortunately, many of the informants feel forced to employ these types of strategies in order to combat stereotypes, especially in the professional environment. As Sherry discusses, it makes her feel as though she is misleading the people around her. Colleen states she has had to dress a certain way in her office to prove to her co-workers that she does not fit any of the stereotypes associated with African-American women. She

refers to her clothing as a "uniform," that she utilizes to mask part of her identity to avoid being stereotyped. Like Sherry, it upsets her that she is not able to be herself:

> I feel that my shopping habits have changed. I would go to certain places to buy certain things to wear to work. I guess to fit in… [It is] like I'm in a uniform. This is my uniform… I feel like I'm not being myself. Why should I have to do this? I shouldn't have to bend over backwards to do this, you know. Not everybody has to do this.

Both Sherry and Colleen must constantly communicate a particular identity and hide certain aspects of themselves that do not seem to fit with that identity. Hochschild (1983) discusses how some individuals must monitor and tightly control what they display to those around them, enacting what she terms emotional labor. People must seem authentic even when their private thoughts and emotions directly contradict what they need to display. In order to accomplish this seeming authenticity, they often engage in "deep acting," which is described as similar to method acting (Hochschild 1983).

Sometimes individuals have to juggle combating a stereotype with the resources that they possess, especially when they are attempting to manipulate their enacted identity. For example, Marissa does not want to patronize a particular store (Dollar General) because she does not want to be stereotyped. Now that financial limitations make it necessary for her to shop there, she brings her own bags. By doing so, she prevents anyone from seeing her carry a bag with the store logo, dissipating the stereotype for anyone who does not directly see her in the store.

> I have my bags that I take to the store. So I feel like part of being all about business is also doing things that people don't expect you to do. So I go to

> Dollar General, which isn't my favorite store in the world, which goes against the black stereotype, because you expect black people to go there, because it's a cheap store. But most of the people that are in there are black and also a lower social economic class, but it's a great bargain… I wouldn't go for a long time, because I knew mostly only black people and poor people went there. So I was trying to fight that stereotype. But then I was like, "Screw it, I need to get some deals here." And they have all name-brand stuff. So it's not just like it is all generic or low quality. It's real stuff, just really cheap. So I bring my bags in there every time I go. So they take my stuff out of my bag and put it in a plastic bag.

Sonya faced a similar situation in graduate school. She wanted to combat certain stereotypes, but was financially constrained. Sonya used consumption as a way to combat stereotypes in her environment at that time. She used consumption to construct her enacted identity frame and communicate her identity in such a way that it directly contradicted the communal identity society ascribed to her:

> When I was in grad school and tried to fit in, that was something I did. I would go out and try to buy the best outfit so other people wouldn't walk in with those stereotypes and assume "Oh, she comes from a hardened background," so someone would say "I love that Coach bag that you have."

Sonya goes on to discuss that eventually she stopped using this strategy because of financial concerns. She is even now still paying off credit cards that she used to facilitate this lifestyle. Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose (2005) argue that while credit cards can free

individuals from immediate financial constraints, oftentimes overuse will result in the individual becoming even more constrained because of the resulting debt. Sonya continues:

> I'd rather have money in my pocket than be dead broke. To make you feel happier to combat a stereotype. But there was a point in time that I did. And it really didn't do me any good. Because people were still going to have the same stereotype and I would have to do a lot of explanations anyway… The flip side, well to me it was a negative. Because I looked like "Oh shoot I have to pay back this bill." But in the same breath, I think that consumption has, it has given me a level of respect. It kind of allowed me to get into doors that I may not have been able to get into. So I will say that it was a double-edged sword. In the long run, it kind of worked out... I mean I'm still paying the bill now, which is painful and negative, but at the same time it gets me in doors that I probably wouldn't be able to get into, had I not gotten that type of education. So yeah, it's a negative, but at the same time it's kind of worked.

Many of these consumption-laden strategies make African-American women feel like they are always on a stage. These behaviors tie in with Goffman's (1959) concept of impression management. Goffman argues that people manage their words, clothing, and settings to manipulate the impression others share of them. This behavior is known as front stage behavior, in that there is always an audience present. This process of impression management is similar to Hecht et al.'s (1993) enacted identity. For African-American women, whenever they are in the company of others they feel they need to

exhibit front stage behavior. They constantly feel the need to manage how they communicate their identity to those around them. Marissa says:

> I feel like I have to carry myself in a certain way, because I feel like people are always watching me… I always try to set an example – you know, dress a certain way, act a certain way, talk a certain way. Because I feel like someone's looking at me. I just don't know who it is.

Unlike other stigmas such as sexuality, race and gender are both stigmas that are not generally concealable (Goffman 1963). Unless African-American women take drastic measures, there is no way to hide their race and gender. This fact directly effects how these women cope with stigma. Sadie says:

> Race isn't something you can put down. It's always there. When you wake up in the morning and when you go to bed at night. It's there. Your sexual identity or you religious expression of something or the language that you speak, you can hide. You can work hard at it. But you can't hide the color of my skin.

The feeling of being constantly "on stage" can cause stress and strain. These women feel they are continually judged due to the prevalence of these stereotypes. The pressure they put on themselves to try to combat these issues can be overwhelming. They work extremely hard to disprove the stereotypes associated with stigma, which is a phenomenon called "John Henryism" (James et al. 1983, 1984). Elise describes having to work harder to disprove stereotypes:

> I saw this one [picture] from an [extra virgin] olive oil ad. It made me think about advice that I got from my grandmother and older women in

> my family when I was younger. They would say that people will think black girls are fast or promiscuous so you have to be extra, extra careful to make sure you never give the impression that you are in anyway doing that. I mean you need to be a good girl, but you have to be an extra, extra, extra good girl in order to make sure no one thinks anything is going to happen… So you choose clothing that's not provocative… And if you diverge too much from that I'm sure there would have been some social sanctions. The belief was you were opening yourself up to people, believing you're something maybe you don't want them to believe you are.

Furthermore, the tendency of some African-Americans to work to overcome stereotypes creates tremendous stress, as they labor to prove that they transcend the stereotype, which can than lead to hypertension and anxiety. Informants describe other negative ramifications of John Henryism that directly involve consumption. Cameron notes:

> Sometimes you self medicate. I'm not even going to lie. You self medicate sometimes. You might drink. Go out to the club. I know people who they smoke weed and do stuff like that. You know what I mean? You find avenues of how to deal with it, instead of dealing with what is right there in front of you. It's a lot easier, you know?

Overall, using the enacted frame of identity to combat stereotypes can be effective. Individuals possess considerable agency over this internal frame, compared to the external—and therefore difficult to control—communal identity, which is much more difficult to change. Furthermore, using consumption to communicate identity is a

successful way to distance oneself from the communal identity society ascribes. However, this strategy does not affect the general stereotype; nor does it change the communal identity for others in the subgroup. Additionally there can be negative consequences to utilizing consumption as a coping strategy. Some informants feel as though they are being dishonest in their representation of themselves, particularly when they conform to Euro-centric beauty ideals that they do not agree with. Others end up financially constrained or even in debt, attempting to project the identity that will distance themselves from the negative stereotypes. Even worse, some will cave under the pressure of having to constantly exhibit front-stage behavior and turn to deviant consumption, such as drugs and alcohol as a way to self-medicate. (See appendix for a summary of the consumption-focused coping categories and additional quotes.)

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discuss four areas of stereotyping for African-American women: (1) sex, (2) financial status, (3) beauty norms, and (4) interpersonal relations. I unpack each of these stereotype areas and show how consumption contributes to the development and perpetuation of each area. I introduce the Communication Theory of Identity to the field of consumer research and extend this theory by offering discussion of the internal and external dimensions, as well as discussing agency in relation to the four frames of identity. Furthermore, I show how the stereotypes can create identity gaps for these women. Moreover, I find that in addition to the known inter-frame identity gaps, individuals can also suffer from intra-frame gaps. Additionally, I discuss how African-

American women manage identity gaps through the manipulation of various identity frames, which I discuss below.

First, when African-American women manipulate their personal identity to minimize or eliminate the identity gap, they may fall prey to stereotype threat. This phenomenon occurs when the existence of the stereotype causes an individual to embody it. It may happen if the person does not feel that she is able to fight the stereotype-based communal identity another way. While this is not a desirable outcome in this example, it may prove beneficial in other contexts outside the scope of this research. Furthermore, it is important to note that as the personal identity frame is internal and the individual has almost limitless control over it, it is easy for someone to employ this strategy. Moreover, consumption is not generally used as a direct strategy, but rather indirectly, supporting the overall strategic decision in some fashion.

Conversely, it is very difficult for African-American women to manipulate their communal identity to manage the gap. The communal frame is external and this identity is ascribed by society. Consequently, people hold little direct agency over their communal identity. The strategies associated with this identity frame are similar to those seen during the Civil Rights Movement. In order for these strategies to succeed, many people must work together to change the overall stereotype and communal identity. While this adjustment is notoriously difficult to achieve, it is a very effective way to combat identity gaps because it eliminates the stereotype and therefore the communal identity that is causing the identity conflict. As with the personal frame manipulation, consumption generally supports other strategies rather than being utilized as a strategy in and of itself. For example, people use consumption to hold rallies, events and educational

outreach programs. While consumption itself is not the strategy in these cases, key products, services, and experiences may indirectly assist with ensuring the success of the strategy.

For this dissertation, manipulating the relational frame is one of the least effective management strategies. As with the communal identity frame, the relational frame possesses an external orientation, thus limiting the amount of agency an individual can exert over it. While easier to manipulate single-handedly than the communal frame, it does not include the additional benefit of leading to sweeping societal-level changes. The most common strategy for this identity frame is to simply allow people to get to know the stereotyped individual so they will understand that the person is not similar to the stereotype. One of the major problems with attempting this strategy is that people may not have ample opportunity to get to know the individual due to time constraints. Furthermore, they may not be willing to become acquainted with the person because of the existence of the stereotype. As with the previous two identity frames, consumption serves as a support mechanism to these types of strategies, rather than as the focus.

Finally, manipulating the enacted identity frame involves consumption-laden management strategies. People use consumption as a means to communicate their identity (that is, contrary to the communal identity) to those around them. This strategy is similar to the theory of self-presentation and impression management (Goffman 1959). African-American women can use consumption to alter their enacted identity either on a regular basis or temporarily. Several informants discuss using consumption as temporary means to change how they communicate their identity, in order to allow those around them to get to know them personally. After they accomplish this goal, these women can relax the

tight hold they exert on their impression management. Constantly manipulating this identity frame can leave people feeling as though they are on stage and that they must exhibit front stage behavior at all times (Goffman 1959). Oftentimes, the pressure to perform can tire people and increase their stress level. Furthermore, the individuals who practice this may feel as though they are hiding aspects of themselves. They may experience guilt and believe they are being inauthentic to those around them. Hochschild (1983) argues that when people feel forced display feelings that are different from those they are actually feeling, a decline in overall well-being can result.

I will discuss my contributions in more depth in Chapter 5. I also outline the limitations and several avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

> So in the future I think there may be a struggle… trying to fit in wherever I work. I will be in the minority. So I think just trying to fit in, but trying not to lose yourself. You want to fit in because you don't want to be the black sheep, but at the same time you don't want to lose yourself. Just little things like your hair. And also making sure you're not *not* doing the work; not doing bad work. You want to be doing the best at what you are doing. If you are in the minority, you don't want to be the one that's not putting in the work as well… I think I'm going to have to work harder to make sure that I'm not lagging behind or not exuding my full potential. I also think I would have to stick to who I am, but make the best of it in the work place, because if you are the black sheep, you aren't going to enjoy it. (Sadie)

This dissertation addresses a gap in consumer research by exploring the complex interrelationships among stigma, identity, and consumption. In general, stigma is understudied in consumer research. Moreover, it is often an emergent finding rather than the subject of deliberate study, leaving the construct largely unpacked. Through my dissertation research, I offer a more comprehensive understanding of stigma and its importance to the field of consumer behavior.

In this dissertation, I examine the stereotypes that African-American women face in their daily lives and their lived experiences with stigmatization. I present a holistic, theoretical model of how stigma affects African-American women's identity and consumption decisions. Overall, African-American women as a group are seldom studied

in consumer research despite their prevalence in the United States. This dissertation addresses that gap and explores how stigmatization affects their sense of self. Furthermore, by employing intersectionality theory to explore how African-American women cope with multiple stigmas, I reveal further complexities, namely how the interconnectedness of race and gender influences African-American women's experience with stigmatization. I identify areas of stereotyping that these women often face and explore how consumption can contribute to the development and/or continuation of these stereotypes. In addition, I discuss important consumer welfare issues regarding African-American women.

One of the major issues I confront in this dissertation is how stigmatization affects African-American women's identity. To explain this phenomenon, I rely heavily on the Communication Theory of Identity, which argues that four identity frames (personal, enacted, relational, and communal) mutually construct each other to form an individual's identity (Hecht et al. 1993). Stereotyping directly influences the communal identity ascribed to African-American women. Oftentimes, the communal identity derived from the stigmatization directly contradicts individual women's personal identities, or who they believe themselves to be. In addition to applying the Communication Theory of Identity to this study, I extend this theory by articulating an external/internal orientation to the various identity frames, as well as discovering another category of identity gaps. Specifically, while Hecht et al. (1993) discuss the prevalence of inter-frame gaps, I find that intra-frame gaps exist as well. For example, contradictory stereotypes from within the African-American community can result in conflicting communal identities and an

intra-communal frame identity gap, which can lead to significant stress for these individuals.

In this chapter, I review my major findings and discuss implications of my dissertation. Subsequently, I review the limitations of the research before outlining directions for future research.

IDENTITY RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Through my dissertation, I seek to reinvigorate the area of identity scholarship in consumer research. Much of the research on the construct of identity is scattered, and lack cohesion, due in part to the fact that identity is complex and multi-dimensional. For example, some scholars focus on self-construal and how individuals view themselves, while other researchers study how broad sociological constructs such as social class affect identity. Rarely does research on one area of identity reference research in another area, leading to the research to become fragmented and disjointed, rather than to the creation of a cohesive body of knowledge. In my dissertation I argue that using theories like the Communication Theory of Identity will not only open up new areas of research, but will also help scholars develop more unified, interrelated scholarship on the subject. This theory pushes social scientists to consider four frames of identity and how they interact with each other to gain a better understanding of the overall construct. As the Communication Theory of Identity combines multiple areas of identity research, it will allow academics to integrate scholarship from these other areas into their own work and thereby tie together many strands of the current research around this construct. The

theory is a relatively new area of study even within communications, the field where it first emerged. As such, scholars have not yet fully unpacked this promising new area of identity research.

Furthermore, I extend the Communication Theory of Identity by identifying whether each frame possesses an internal or external orientation. Researchers can more fully discuss the factors dictating the discourses that govern each frame if they first identify the type of orientation each frame possesses. For example, the personal identity frame is rooted in an internal orientation, meaning that the individual governs the expectations and norms of the frame. It follows that the workings of the identity frames differ based on their orientation. While the personal aspect of identity possesses an internal orientation, the communal frame manifests an external orientation, which means that forces outside the individual preside over that aspect of identity. For example, society ascribes the identity associated with the communal frame. This difference in orientation greatly affects how the frame operates and, as I discuss in Chapter 4, how much agency an individual possesses over any particular frame.

Although research in this area introduces the concept of identity gaps, little attention is paid to how individuals cope with the resulting identity conflicts. I also examine how African-American women manage identity gaps. More specifically, by examining consumption as a management strategy, I develop a holistic model that details how individuals manage identity gaps through other identity-based management strategies. In my model, I study how these women manipulate all four identity frames to minimize or eliminate the identity gaps caused by stereotyping. The agency that individuals do or do not exert over a particular aspect of their identity determines in part

how successfully they will manipulate each particular frame. These management strategies illuminate the inner workings of the construct of identity, providing a glimpse of how these frames interact with each other and how a shift in one frame affects the others. Furthermore, these strategies demonstrate how people can very deliberately manipulate aspects of their identity for identity conflict and impression management.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN AND STIGMATIZATION

As previously discussed, attributes such as race and gender do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are interconnected (De Reus, Few, and Blume 2005; Espiritu 1992; Omi and Winant 1994). In order to gain a better understanding of race and gender, I examine not only those two attributes, but also how they mutually construct each other. Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that stresses the importance of exploring race and gender in concert, rather than individually. I believe this perspective offers deeper insight into African-American women's lived experiences. In this section, I will discuss some of the major implications of this research for African-American women and stigma research. I will focus on issues such as racism, beauty as resistance, authenticity, and consumer welfare. Although not the focus of my dissertation, these issues can be brought to the forefront by other scholars interested in the topics of stigma and identity in general, and the consumption experiences of African-American (or other minority) women (or men) in particular.

Racism

While not one of my original research foci, the issue of racism emerges in much of my informants' discussions. For example, Dawn asserts, "We deal with [racism] all our lives, being black. I mean it's just something that is in the world and never will go away." Shenelle, who used to work as a dental assistant, describes facing racism from customers in the workplace on a regular basis, "They may not want me to assist the dentist in a procedure just because I'm black… Just pure racism." Overall it is apparent that racism is still a significant factor in the lives of African-American women. Kaelynn succinctly summarizes the fact, "There is still a lot of racism going on."

The interaction of race and gender form the stereotypes and other negative evaluations that I discuss in Chapter 4. However, it must be noted that racism on its own is still a major issue in the United States. Racism has changed significantly since the 1960s; while still prevalent, it has become less overt (O'Brien and Korgen). My informants echo this sentiment. Amelia says, "[Racism is not] blatantly visible to the naked eye or naked ear… Racism has come of age. They don't wear sheets anymore. They wear three-piece suits... Now [racism] is alive and well behind a computer. Behind a desk. Behind walls of decision making." Rather than blatant acts, Amelia argues that the effects of racism are felt in more subtle ways, such as not getting a particular job or not receiving a promotion. This idea that racism has changed from something that was obvious and violent to something less blatant is apparent throughout my text. Ellis says, "No one is so obvious about [racism]. It's very disturbing, because it's nothing you can put your hand on, but you kind of have this sense that something's happening. It's hard, because it's like trying to grab smoke."

Changes in racism are the subject of much debate, especially in the area of sociology (e.g., Bobo, Kleugel, and Smith 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis 1999; O'Brien and Korgen 2007). This covert nature not only makes racism more difficult to identify, but also changes how individuals work to combat it. Subtle discrimination can be much more challenging to fight than overt racism. While there are still extremists today, for the most part racism no longer leaves a calling card. In fact, in many cases informants describe not even being completely certain if an activity or attitude they perceive is racist. They may believe that something about a particular interaction is "off," but cannot say with absolute surety that the encounter is an instance of racism. Moreover, such subtleties make it easier to internalize the negative evaluations, which can lead African-Americans to fall victim to stereotype threat. The questions for researchers remain—how exactly has racism changed? In what ways is it experienced today?

Beauty as Resistance

Beauty stereotypes are another major source of contention for African-American women. As discussed in Chapter 4, Eurocentric beauty ideals dominate throughout the United States. Traditional African features, such as darker skin, fuller figures, and curly hair are not considered beautiful. Even today African-American women feel pressured to embrace the Western concept of beauty (Patton 2006). These expectations become especially important for African-American women who want to advance in the workplace. Hooks (1995) argues "once again the fate of black folks rested with white power. If a black person wanted a job and found it easier to get it if he or she did not wear a natural hairstyle, etc., this was perceived by many to be a legitimate reason to change" (122). African-American women often spend considerable money and suffer through pain

to attempt to match these ideals. Failure to do so leaves them not only "not beautiful" in society's estimation but also at risk of being considered militant and anti-white. This theme is particularly salient to the question of hair; more specifically, whether to process it or leave it natural.

A multitude of products are designed and marketed to help African-American women conform to the Eurocentric notion of beauty, and as my dissertation finds, my informants purchase and use these goods and services extensively. As I observe in Chapter 4, this type of consumption encourages the perpetuation of these beauty stereotypes. Hair straightening in particular became controversial during the 1960s and 1970s Civil Rights Movement (Hooks 1995; Patton 2006). Many Civil Rights Leaders at the time denounced conforming to Westernized beauty ideals and promoted the "Black is Beautiful" movement, encouraging African-American women to embrace their natural beauty. Wilson and Russell (1996) find that for African American women, hairstyle designs often become political statements. For these women adopting Eurocentric beauty ideals means assimilating to white culture. Keeping their natural hair, then, comes to symbolize pride in their heritage and resistance to the dominant culture.

However, Orbe and Harris (2001) point out that oftentimes these women must find a balance between expressing their identity and achieving success in the workplace. In fact, Patton (2006) argues that women often find it easier to conform to Eurocentric beauty ideals than to deal with the political repercussions of natural hair. So, on one hand, natural hair can be read positively as heritage pride, but may also be construed as unprofessional, "messy," and even militant. On the other hand, wearing a "Eurocentric" hairstyle, which may be considered pretty by Western standards, may be interpreted as

turning their back on their race. Many of my informants argue that they should be able to choose how they want to wear their hair without the weight of these stereotypes on their shoulders. If they want to straighten their hair, they should be able to do so without feeling like they are contributing to the continuation of the westernized beauty ideal stereotypes. Similarly, if they want to keep their hair natural, it should not be considered as a militant act. Perhaps Caldwell (2000) expresses my informants' sentiments the most succinctly: "I want to know my hair again, the way I knew it before I knew that my hair is me, before I lost the right to me, before I knew that the burden of beauty—or lack of it—for an entire race of people could be tied up with my hair and me" (275). What are some of the other ways that beauty as resistance manifests itself? Does traditional African clothing fall into this category? What are the aesthetic components of beauty as resistance?

Authenticity

The idea of authenticity is strongly related to the previous subject of "beauty as resistance." Oftentimes, popular culture links black authenticity with the street and urban living, arguing that in order for individuals to be "really black," they need to conform to these trends. First and foremost, as many of my informants argue, there is not one way to be "black." They assert that both the dominant culture and the African-American community need to recognize this fact. As I mention above, this is closely related to discussions regarding how African-American women wear their hair. Taylor (2006) argues that hairstyle choices, including the different creative ways many African-American women straighten their hair, possess "such racialized significance that participation in the practice can be a way of expressing black pride rather than a way of

precluding it" (668). He asserts that there are many different ways for African-American women to express pride in their heritage. This sentiment resonates with my informants.

Another issue surrounding the idea of authenticity is whether African-American women who deliberately manipulate their enacted identities in certain contexts (and most often in the professional arena) are being "who they really are." Several of my informants struggle with choices they are forced to confront in these cases. They feel they are deceiving people (and themselves) in some way. However, while pointing out that they should not be judged on superficial characteristics like hair, informants admit that it is sometimes simply easier to conform to Western ideals. Perhaps after they form stable relationships with people, they reason, they will start to let their true selves emerge. The women dislike being placed in positions where they feel they must choose between being authentic and succeeding in the workplace.

Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprising, by most of the scholarship on authenticity in consumer research involves authentic consumption, whether it be a physical item (Grayson and Shulman 2000), brand (Holt 2002), or experience (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). However, the concept of authenticity in this case involves an individual being authentic and "who he or she really is." I present the idea that particular consumption choices can either help or hinder an individual from achieving this state. Perhaps the research most similar to this assertion is Rose and Wood's (2005) study on reality television. They argue that there are three elements of paradox in constructing authenticity on reality television: (1) situation, (2) identification, and (3) production. For the purpose of this discussion I will focus on the second element. Identification explores how viewers identify with the participants of a reality television show. Participants are

judged, in part, by how similar they are to everyday people; in short, whether they are authentic. However, unlike the concept I put forward, these participants' authenticity is decided by an outside source, namely the viewer. In my research, it is the individual contemplating whether or not she is being authentic, and how her consumption decisions, especially involving beauty, affect this construct. Some feel that by conforming to Western beauty ideals (and the associated consumption practices, e.g., processing their hair or wearing a more conservative style of dress), they are being less than authentic. Their consumption choices are almost a physical manifestation of what they believe is their inauthenticity. How does this inauthenticity affect their identity? Does it create other identity gaps? How do these women manage their feelings of inauthenticity?

Consumer Welfare

There are significant consumer welfare implications for this research. Among the major issues that emerge are the consequences of trying to manage or combat stereotypes, namely the potential financial, physical health, and mental health ramifications associated with doing so. For example, one informant is still paying off credit card debt from a time when she was buying designer clothing and accessories to distance herself from negative socio-economic status stereotypes. Other informants describe "self-medicating" with drugs and alcohol. Still another describes her friend's use of skin whitening bleach all over her body, despite explicit warnings that doing so could damage her health. The application of the stereotypes that I discuss over the course of this dissertation may result in devastating consequences. In order to fully understand stigma, we must examine the ramifications of this phenomenon on consumers' mental and physical well-being.

Moreover, the media and advertising play a significant role in reproducing stereotypes—in particular, sexual stereotypes of African-American women—to impressionable youth. The prevalence of these sexual scripts, particularly in hip hop music videos, can lead to significant negative health consequences for young African-American women. These scripts form the basis of people's attitudes and beliefs about their own and other African-American women's sexuality. Consequently, these sexual scripts encourage adolescent African-American females to engage in unsafe sexual practices, which can lead to sexually transmitted diseases. According to the Center for Disease Control's latest statistics, the rate of new HIV infection for American-American women is approximately four times higher than that for Hispanic women, and almost 15 times as high as for Caucasian women. Furthermore, as I observe earlier, African-American women experience non-voluntary first sexual encounters at a significantly higher rate than any other race. The sexual scripts that emerge through the study of race and gender stigmatization yield serious consumer welfare implications that demand serious consideration. How does self-medicating with drugs or alcohol affect an individual's identity? How do people manage when they are in debt from attempting to distance themselves from stereotypes? How do the sexual scripts reinforced through the media manifest? What other negative consequences do stereotypes cause?

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this research. Some are common to all types of qualitative research, while others are specific to this study. One of the major limitations

of most qualitative research is its the lack of generalizability. In my dissertation, I explore one stigmatized group's experiences with stigma and identity. The model I present may be only applicable for African-American women. While some of the management strategies may apply to other stigmatized groups, it is possible not all will apply. Furthermore, other groups may employ additional management strategies not employed by African-American women.

Additionally, I interviewed informants to the point of theoretical saturation, where the results across informant encounters become repetitive and adding an additional informant yields no additional insights into the phenomena being studied (Belk et al. 1989; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Nevertheless, the model I present may not be comprehensive. There may be categories or management strategies that my informants do not utilize or discuss. Furthermore, as mentioned above, other stereotyped groups may utilize additional strategies that they develop in coping with stigmatization and/or identity gaps. In the future, other researchers may be able to extend my work and develop a more comprehensive model.

As discussed earlier, it is also important to note that while the informants of this study are African-American women, I am a Caucasian female. Since I am not a member of the subgroup I interviewed, my data collection and analysis is based on an outsider view. There is considerable debate over whether the insider or outsider perspective is better equipped to deal with sensitive issues. Insiders may gain the trust of the informants more easily and may possess the advantage of understanding the culture. However, Bishop (2005) argues that while insiders may possess a more authentic understanding of the environment, "there are concerns that insiders are inherently biased, or that they are

too close to the culture to ask critical questions" (111). Qualitative research is often performed collaboratively with a mix of insider and outsider perspectives, as each offers something valuable. However, dissertation research is performed independently, rather than collaboratively. Not being an African-American woman, and therefore not confronting the stigmas and stereotypes that these women experience, there may be certain issues that these women would not feel comfortable discussing with me. While I did not feel that my informants were reluctant or reticent, the issue is still a concern. These issues are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

Another limitation of this research is that the concept of identity gaps is an emergent finding that I discovered while interpreting the data. I did not ask informants to discuss aspects of this theoretical framework per se. Furthermore, since I focused on how stigmatization affects identity, my construct choice limited the types of identity gaps present. In addition to introducing the concept of intra-frame identity gaps, I concentrate on the personal-communal identity gap. There are other types of identity gaps that I do not discuss due to the context of this dissertation. Management strategies for these gaps may be different than the ones I identify, due to the different discourses that govern the individual identity frames. How individuals manage these gaps – and specifically, how they use consumption to manage these gaps – may be different than what I discuss in this study. Additionally, there are numerous causes other than stigmatization for identity gaps. It may prove beneficial to explore these other causes and investigate whether they influence how people manage identity gaps.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation advances several exciting avenues for future research – from identity research to further research in stigma and stigma management. In this section, I will address prospective research topics in the general areas of identity, stigmatization, and race and gender.

Identity Research Directions

The state of identity research in consumer research is particularly fragmented. Scholars need to conduct an in-depth analysis of the research. There are many different areas of identity research, but researchers seldom draw upon scholarship beyond the scope of their own inquiry. As the Communication Theory of Identity clearly shows, the different areas of identity do not exist in a vacuum but mutually construct each other. In order to gain a clearer understanding of any one aspect of identity, it is imperative that researchers explore how the components interact.

The Communication Theory of Identity and the concept of identity gaps provide consumer researchers with a new, potentially richer way to explore of the concept of identity. By using the different frames of identity as a theoretical scaffold, scholars can gain new insights into how the construct of identity fluctuates. Researchers will be able to identify the internal and external factors that cause these oscillations and be better equipped to study the interrelationships between these factors and identity.

Once we gain a better understanding of how identity is constructed, researchers will be able to explore other areas of identity research. For example, scholars need to study how consumption affects the different frames. While the enacted identity frame is

clearly consumption-laden due to its communicative nature, the other frames also possess strong consumption-related implications. Researchers should study how individuals use consumption to manipulate all of the different identity frames (not just the enacted frame) in various environmental and situational contexts. They can explore further how consumption is used as an identity management strategy.

Moreover, since this dissertation focuses on identity gaps caused primarily by stigmatization, consumer research can explore other identity gaps. By studying different types of identity gaps, scholars may gain a better understanding of not only the consequences of identity conflict, but also the full range of management strategies. As discussed previously, different discourses regulate the expectations and norms of each individual identity gap. As such, it is essential that researchers address how these diverse discourses affect identity gap management. The strategies employed to cope with a personal-communal gap may be very different than those utilized to manage a personal-enacted identity gap. Through research in this area, academics will be able to view how the norms and expectations of each identity frame influence management strategies.

Furthermore, scholars should examine factors other than stigmatization that can lead to the creation of identity gaps. While stereotyping can lead to a personal-communal identity gap, other constructs can lead to the same issue. Other factors, both internal and external, can generate other types of identity gaps. Researchers should understand how the cause of the identity conflict affects the identity gap. Additionally, while I extend the theory of identity gaps to include intra-frame gaps, other scholars may discover other types of identity gaps. Moreover, researchers should study how the type of gap (for example, intra-frame versus inter-frames) affects how individuals manage them. Lastly,

scholars can start to examine how to measure identity gaps. They can develop a scale that can measure not only what type of identity gap a particular individual possesses, but also the severity of that gap. This type of scale will also be beneficial in studying how identity gaps affect other constructs.

Stigma and Stigma Management Research Directions

Scholars have yet to fully explore the interrelationship between stigma and consumption. Researchers need to investigate other types of stigma. In this dissertation, I examine African-American women's lived experiences with stigmatization. Throughout the research process, I focus on the effect of race and gender interaction for these women. The consequences of a different stigma and associated stereotypes may be very different than those that I observe. Additionally, scholars also need to look at the interaction of other attributes. If other researchers look at the interaction of sexual orientation and race, for example they may find different results. The more we as a community of scholars research the effects of stigma and the interactions of different combinations, the more we will achieve a comprehensive understanding of the construct of stigma.

The relationship between consumption and stigma is extremely complex and multidimensional. In order to continue to unpack these constructs, academics need to examine different aspects of the relationship, from how consumption can create and perpetuate stereotypes to the stigmatization of consumption choices to consumption as a management strategy. As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, consumption can aid in both the generation and continuation of stereotypes. By further studying this aspect of the relationship between stigma and consumption, scholars may be able to identify certain factors across stigmas that can help us gain a more generalizable view of how

consumption helps develop stereotypes. In addition, consumer researchers should pay particular attention to stigmatization-caused consumption choices. Scholars need to develop a better understanding of why these particular consumption decisions are stigmatized, which stereotypes are associated with stigma, how these perceptions develop, and why an individual makes consumption decisions that are associated with negative stereotypes. Academics need to understand why people make deliberate decisions that will cause them to be stigmatized. Researchers also should examine the different consumption strategies that people use to manage stereotyping, across stigmatized attributes. While there may be certain strategies that are context specific, there are probably a multitude of strategies that are common amongst different stigmas.

Researchers also should explore how the different characteristics of individual stigmas affect people's experiences with them. For example, neither race nor gender is generally concealable. The model I develop, as well as the strategies that I discuss in this research, may not apply if the stigma is more readily concealable, as are religion or sexual orientation. In studying this area, academics can explore whether people choose to conceal certain stigmatized attributes and perhaps more importantly, when and where they do not conceal these stigmas (and the consequences of hiding these attributes on their well-being). Additionally, scholars should study how individuals conceal stigma and the lengths that they will go in order to hide particular stigmatized attributes, as well as how these actions can translate into effective management strategies.

Moreover, scholars can investigate how an individual's stigmatization affects his or her social networks, especially within family interactions and dynamics. An individual's stigma affects not only that individual, but also his or her family, and can

result in stress for the social unit (Poindexter 2005). It is important to understand how families manage an individual member's stigma, specifically how they use consumption to cope with the stigmatization. Researchers can also explore how the management strategies affect family relationships, both positively and negatively, as well as addressing how those who enjoy family support manage and cope with stigmatization compared to those people who do not possess this advantage.

Race and Gender Research Directions

As I stated earlier, I believe there are significant consumer welfare implications for this research. First and foremost, it is important to study marginalized groups. Gopaldas and Fischer (in press) argue that researchers need to look at these underrepresented groups and their lived experiences. The context of this dissertation, African-American women, definitely falls within this group. There are several important streams of research that deserve scholarly attention with respect to these segments. One of the most important areas is the consumer welfare of these marginalized groups, and of African-American women in particular. Researchers need to better understand these groups' lived experiences. We should be asking questions such as: What does it mean to be marginalized? Why are these individuals being marginalized? What significant situational and environmental factors lead to marginalization? How does marginalization affect people's day-to-day lives and their identity? How does marginalization affect consumption decisions? How do consumption decisions affect marginalization? How do these decisions affect consumer welfare?

In particular, scholars need to better understand how consumption associated with stigma management can be detrimental to African-American women. As noted, one of

my informants describes going deeply into credit card debt to buy brand name clothing and accessories to distance herself from some of the negative stereotypes associated with African-American women. It is important to understand how and why some consumers will go to such extremes to conceal certain aspects of themselves, as well as how these actions affect them over time. Researchers need to understand what factors drive women to these types of acts as well as the consequences of these behaviors.

It is also important to explore how some marginalized people transcend the limitations society places on them. For example, in this dissertation, several of my informants discuss African-American women entrepreneurs who are not only successful in their own right, but who also help the African-American community. One of these women produces different African-American women dolls that are similar to Barbie dolls. These dolls are offered with different hair styles, shapes, and skin colors so that young African-American females can possess something to relate to, and can grow up learning to be proud of their heritage. Researchers need to understand how these entrepreneurs succeed and how their efforts affect the marginalized community as a whole.

There are veritable endless research avenues that scholars can pursue with respect to all of the different areas I discuss. Some of these topics are context specific, while many need to move beyond a particular environment in order to produce more generalizable results. However, regardless of the specific research that is pursued, I urge scholars to pay particular attention to the consumer welfare implications. I hope this dissertation will spark significant interest in these areas of consumer research.

CONCLUSION

In my dissertation, I explore the complex interrelationships among stigma, identity, and consumption for African-American women. I review the current relevant literature in both identity and stigma research. I also discuss the importance of intersectionality and how attributes such as race and gender mutually construct each other.

In Chapter 4, I describe four areas of stereotyping for these women and trace the stereotypes through history to show how they evolved. I explain the role of consumption in creating and perpetuating the negative evaluations. In this section, I also discuss stereotyping in service encounters, specifically in restaurants and retail stores. In one of my key contributions, I find that stigmatization and the associated negative stereotypes can create identity gaps. In examining how stigma affects identity, I extend the Communication Theory of Identity in several ways. First, I describe whether each of the identity frames possesses an internal or external orientation. I use these orientations to determine the amount of agency an individual exerts over any particular frame. While the Communication Theory of Identity identifies inter-frame identity gaps, I extend the theory by discussing the existence of intra-frame identity gaps. I also discuss how individuals can manage identity gaps through the manipulations of other identity frames, concentrating on consumption-based management strategies.

Through my dissertation, I reveal the struggles that stigmatization can cause among my informants, sometimes on a daily basis. The effects of stereotyping can be devastating, affecting people's finances, physical health, and mental health. I also want to

highlight that many of the women that I spoke with found ways to transcend these stereotypes and are themselves enlightening examples of why society should not apply stereotypes. In conclusion, I hope that my research will encourage scholars to pursue these areas of study, especially to promote consumer welfare.

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APPENDIX

INFORMANT COLLAGES

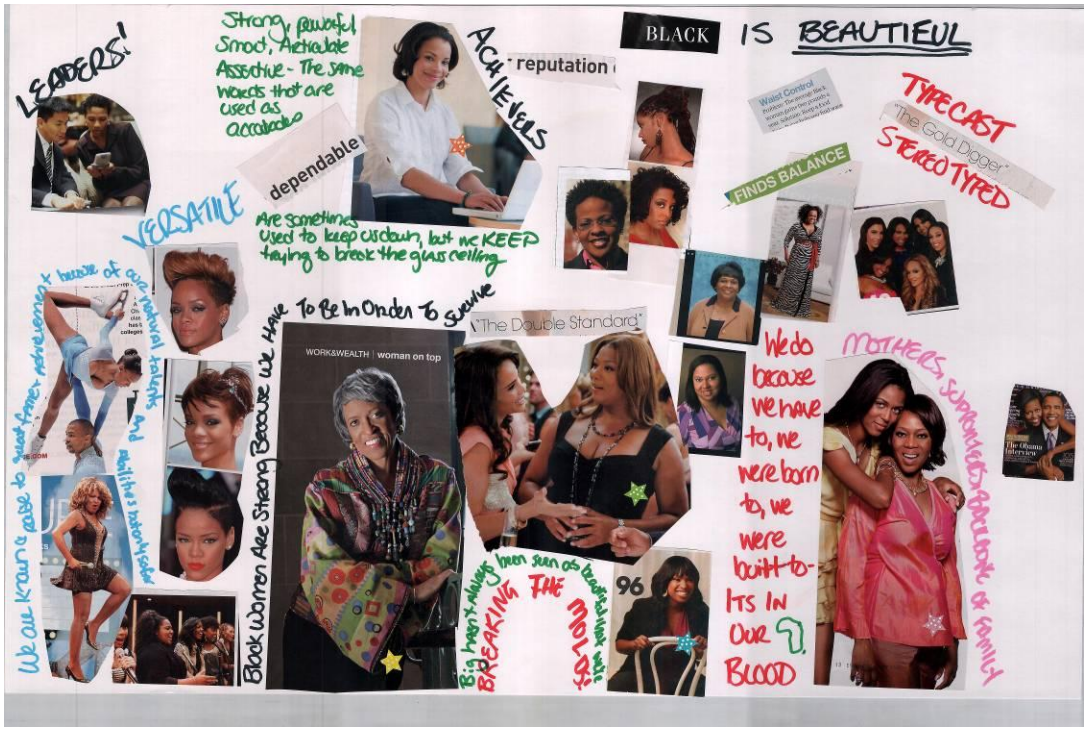
Adele

Alison

Cameron

Colleen

Paige


LEADERS!
Strong, powerful, Smart, Articulate Assertive - The same words that are used as accolades
ACHIEVERS
reputation
BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL
dependable
VERSATILE
Are sometimes used to keep us down, but we KEEP trying to break the glass ceiling
TYPECAST
"The Gold Digger"
STEREOTYPED
FINDS BALANCE
We all know a case to prove [illegible] achievement + because of our natural talents and abilities, intelligence
Black Women Are Strong Because We Have To Be In Order To Survive
WORK&WEALTH | woman on top
"The Double Standard"
Big men always been seen as beautiful next with BREAKING THE MOLD
96
We do because we have to, we were born to, we were built to- ITS IN OUR BLOOD
MOTHERS, SURROUNDED BY A LOOK OF FAMILY

Sadie


natural glow
PEACE
LOVE
pure
Go Purple!
My Black is Beautiful
FASHION
LIVING
mind, body, spirit
THE MIDDLE CLASS ACHIEVEMENT GAP
CULTURE
BEAUTY
hot
HAIR
SEX
BEAUTY
Dangerous Curves

Table A.1 Miller and Kaiser's (2001) Stigma Management Strategies

Strategy	Description	Example
Resignation	Stigmatized individual accepts the stigma and does not attempt to change the situation; often leads to depression and decreased self-esteem	Handicapped individual refuses physical therapy, because he or she assumes that it will not help
Confrontation	Stigmatized individual lashes out in frustration; can result in destructive and violent behavior; often an unproductive strategy	Individual physically attacking another person
Enclave Withdrawal	Stigmatized individuals band to together with other similarly stigmatized people; provides the individuals with a system of social support; similar to Goffman's (1963) group alignment	Individual joining a group of other similarly stigmatized people
Mainstream Engagement	Stigmatized individual attempts to bring his or her stigma into mainstream society; may be difficult to accomplish depending on how resistant the mainstream population is to the stigma	Apple subculture becoming more popular in the United States

Table A.1 (cont.)

Strategy	Description	Example
Concealment	Stigmatized individual attempts to hide the attribute that is stigmatized; can cause identity to become ambiguous as the individual attempts to continually conceal certain attributes of his or her identity	Upwardly mobile individual concealing his or her working class background
Escapism	Stigmatized individual attempts to divert him or herself from the reality of his or her stigma through fantasies, such as fictional television programs or movies; may provide short-term relief, but not confronting the issue in a more direct manner can lead to increased alienation from society	Individual going to a fantasy movie where good triumphs over evil to take his or her mind off of their situation
Hedonism	Stigmatized individual attempts to divert him or herself from the reality of his or her stigma by participating in an activity characteristic of his or her subculture; similar to escapism; may provide short-term relief, but not confronting the issue in a more direct manner can lead to increased alienation from society	Member of the Harley Davidson subculture may take a motorcycle ride

Table A.1 (cont.)

Strategy	Description	Example
Spiritualism	Stigmatized individual seeks relief through a higher power	Individual praying to God
Nostalgia	Stigmatized individual copes with his or her stigma by remembering past times	Elderly individual remembering the "good ole' days"
Creative Production	Stigmatized individual searches for refuges where he or she can institute his or her own norms; these individuals often start trends	Inner city individual designing his or her own clothes which are then mass produced

Table A.2: Informant Bios

Adele is a mother in her early forties. She works in healthcare. Adele loves to dress in the bold, colorful clothes that she thinks are indicative of African-American culture.

Allison is a single mother in her mid-forties. She works as an administrative assistant. Allison loves cooking for her family and enjoys spicy foods.

Amelia is a mother in her early fifties. She is currently on disability. Amelia loves fashion, shoes, and makeup.

Cameron is a single mother in her early thirties. She works as a teacher. Cameron dislikes that many stores in local malls cater to Caucasian women and do not carry clothes that fit African-American women.

Charlotte is in her fifties. She tries to mentor African-American youth in the community. In order to make ends meet, Charlotte shops at secondhand stores.

Colleen is an academic professional in her forties. She has specific clothes that she wears to work that will not draw attention to her race or gender.

Dawn is a grandmother in her fifties. She loves to support other African-Americans in the entertainment industry by purchasing their music albums and movies.

Elise is a mother in her mid-forties. She works as an assistant professor. Elise likes to celebrate her African-American heritage through traditional foods such as black-eyed peas. She feels this is especially important to impart to her daughter.

Table A.2 (cont.)

Grace is in her forties. She works in building maintenance. Grace likes to own jewelry to show that she "is not poor."

Janet is in her forties. She is an event planner. Janet loves to travel and experience new cultures.

Jennifer is in her fifties. She works in the performing arts. Jennifer embraces her natural hair and supports historically black colleges. She wears her hair in a natural style to portray her pride in her culture.

Kaelynn is a single mother in her thirties. She is currently unemployed. Kaelynn has used a hair relaxer since she was eight years old.

Marianne is a mother in her fifties. She is a laboratory technician. Marianne likes to take senior bingo trips with her friends.

Marissa is a divorced mother in her forties. She is an academic professional. Marissa loves fashion and is transitioning away from processed hair.

Paige is a mother in her forties. She is a program coordinator. Paige loves to embrace her African-American culture with her clothing. She goes out of her way to find African-American dolls for her daughter.

Roberta is a mother in her mid fifties. She is currently on disability. Roberta feels it is important to pamper herself in order to be able to deal with daily stresses.

Table A.2 (cont.)

Rowan is a married mother in her forties. She is an Associate Dean. Rowan tries to make healthy decisions for her family, from what foods they eat to what activities they do as a family.

Sadie is in her early twenties. She works as a teacher. Sadie admires women like Maya Angelo and Michelle Obama. She also thinks that it is important to learn about her heritage as an African-American woman.

Shenelle is a mother in her thirties. She is currently a graduate student. Shenelle makes it a point to support black-owned businesses.

Sherry is in her twenties. She works in food service. Sherry has to travel to Chicago or New York to buy natural hair products that she cannot purchase locally.

Shirley is mother of three in her mid-thirties. She works in human resources. Shirley believes that books and education can debunk racial and gender stereotypes.

Sonya is in her forties. She is an academic professional. Sonya dislikes many hip hop music artists because she feels they contribute to the negative stereotypes associated with African-American women.

Teisha is a nineteen year old single woman. She is currently unemployed. Teisha will not leave the house without her hair permed and styled.

Table A.3: Common Stereotype Categories (Research Questions 1 & 2)

Stereotype Category	**Sub-Category**	**Description**	**Informant Excerpt**
Sex	Jezebel/Diva/ Gold-Digger	• The Jezebel, diva, and gold-digger identities portray African-American women as promiscuous; these women may use sex to gain material possessions • Stereotype portrays as wearing provocative clothing • Stereotype reproduced through the media (e.g., hip hop music videos)	"There are a lot of times where it happens, but probably one that sticks out is the image of the easy black female in college. If you are just going out to a club, it's all about how a guy would approach… He thought, 'Oh, I'm going to be able to sleep with her tonight.' Oh, you thought wrong… I am no longer in the dating circuit, but I tell young women when you go on a date, don't feel like you have to have sex with someone. That's something you have to wait for that. And also don't dress in a way that is inappropriate. You can feel elegant and glamorous without feeling like you have to lower yourself by putting on hot pants and halters and slinky stuff all the time." (Sonya)

Table A.3 (cont.)

Stereotype Category	Sub-Category	Description	Informant Excerpt
	Welfare Mother	• Primary characteristics of the welfare mother associated with financial stereotypes (discussed below) • Stereotype portrays African-American women as single mothers who have multiple children and live off the government	"You are treated kind of different from the outside sometimes. Like I have two children of my own and I'm not married… You go out and you don't have a ring on, or like my sons have the same last name, but it's different from my last name, so you will get the, 'Oh' kind of look sometimes… They give you that look. It makes you feel like you are just popping out kids, you're not married and they are illegitimate type thing." (Kaelynn)

Table A.3 (cont.)

Stereotype Category	Sub-Category	Description	Informant Excerpt
Financial	Welfare Mother	• The welfare mother stereotype portrays African-American women as unmarried, sexually promiscuous with multiple children, and receiving public assistance • People assume African-American women receive government assistance • African-American women's consumption decisions examined	"I registered [my daughter] for school and you had to go to different stations to register. And one of the stations was for the free lunch program. And I'm assuming that maybe African-Americans are predominant on that program. This lady literally chased us around that gym. From station seven to station nine telling me I had to fill out that form… You know I think she thought that everybody black signed up for the free lunch… What I really wanted to say [was] 'Do you really think that every one of us, that all black people are signed up for free lunch?" (Colleen)

Table A.3 (cont.)

Stereotype Category	Sub-Category	Description	Informant Excerpt
	Problem Customer	• African-American women feel that they are treated differently in service encounters • Sales associates assume they are going to steal • Restaurant workers assume they are not generous tippers • Stereotypes affect the level of service that African-American women receive	"I've been followed in the stores before. I've been mistreated in restaurants before. I have had to bring attention to the fact that I have been treated differently than others by sales people before… I was in a store once, and it just so happened I was dressed down on that particular day, and I was being followed in the store. And I just turned around and said, 'Can I help you with something?'… I didn't feel like the service I was getting was very respectful." (Paige)

Table A.3 (cont.)

Stereotype Category	Sub-Category	Description	Informant Excerpt
Beauty	Hair	• Eurocentric beauty ideals mandate that hair be straight • African-American women's natural hair often does not conform to these ideals • Many African-American women struggle to conform, despite the pain and monetary cost they incur • Women who do not conform can experience difficulty in the workplace	"Women still tell me if they work in corporate that they have a lot of issues if they wear their hair natural. They would probably have someone tell them, 'You can't do that.'... So women may feel they have to suppress part of themselves in order to be successful." (Elise)

Table A.3 (cont.)

Stereotype Category	Sub-Category	Description	Informant Excerpt
	Skin	• Westernized standards of beauty prize lighter skin over darker skin	"Black people come in all different shades… And people seem, like if you look through those magazines most of the women, it's more light skinned. Dark skinned women get left out of a lot of things... [My mom] went to Louisiana and they had a paper bag and if you were darker than that paper bag you couldn't get in." (Alison)
	Figure	• African-American women are often portrayed as overweight • Fuller figures are considered unattractive • Ideal is reinforced through the media	"Sometimes, well growing up, especially where I grew up it was an all white neighborhood, and some of these things were not looked upon as being a good thing, maybe, especially maybe body size if you are bigger." (Adele)

Table A.3 (cont.)

Stereotype Category	Sub-Category	Description	Informant Excerpt
Interpersonal Relationship	The Angry Black Woman	• African-American women are portrayed as loud and aggressive • Stereotype is often reinforced through media including movies and television	"I even had professor tell me that when she came [to the school], she got a very negative view of black people, saying that black women were very militant and very aggressive… For a woman, specifically a black woman, it's the most negative thing in the world." (Sherry)

Table A.4: Identity Gaps (Research Question 3)

Identity Gap	Description	Informant Excerpt
Personal-Communal Identity Gap	• Inter-frame gap (between frame gap) • Conflict between personal identity frame and communal identity frame • Occurs when how individuals view themselves differs from the identity that society ascribes to them (Hecht 1993)	"[There's the stereotype] that we don't have family values, because [society] sees a lot of stories or they might see in the community or even in the schools, the younger girls with the babies… And they probably think that's… how we prefer things to be and that's just not true. It's just a sad circumstance, but I know that's a stereotype." (Colleen)

Table A.4 (cont.)

Identity Gap	Description	Informant Excerpt
Communal Identity Gap	• Intra-frame gap (within frame gap) • Identity conflict within the communal identity frame • Occurs when individuals are subjected to two opposing communal identities	"It's almost like a lot of people that are natural say, they think you hate yourself if your hair is straight. That's not always true. Some people are like 'I don't have time to worry about wearing my hair like that,' because it is a hard transition if your hair has been straight almost your whole entire life… It's not necessarily that they have this internalized thing going on, some self-hatred. It's not necessarily that. People do have a lot of assumptions and do a lot of stereotyping on their own, even within the culture and not taking the time to understand why this person is." (Sherry)

Table A.5: Managing the Gap (Research Questions 4 & 5)

Strategy Type	Description	Effectiveness	Informant Excerpt
Personal Identity Frame	• Accept the stereotype • Existence of stereotype results in individuals internalizing it into their personal identity • Consumption is not utilized as a management strategy, but can be used to facilitate other strategies	• Less difficult strategy to implement • Considerable agency over the frame • Represents danger of stereotypes • In the case of negative stereotypes, this strategy is not desirable	"I think there are so many stereotypes that people fall into and they just think, 'This is kind of what is expected of me and I will not move beyond it.' I think that is why you see second, third, fourth generations of people, African-American women, in projects or on government assistance, because they do not evolve. They do not move beyond [the stereotype]." (Janet)

Table A.5 (cont.)

Strategy Type	Description	Effectiveness	Informant Excerpt
Communal Identity Frame	• Attempt to change the stereotype • Strategy often implemented by a group working together, rather than an individual working alone • Consumption is not utilized as a management strategy, but can be used to facilitate other strategies	• Difficult strategy to implement • Lack of agency over the frame • Successful when multiple people work together • Civil Rights Movement • When successful, effective way of managing the identity gap	"I chose the [picture of the] hands for unity [on my collage]. You know, just not losing sight of the Civil Rights Movement. I think in this day and age… we are moving away from traditional things... and we aren't as unified as we use to be. I think about [that] it was only forty years ago that they made this big change and today we are doing our own thing. We are not trying to stay together as a group anymore." (Adele)

Table A.5 (cont.)

Strategy Type	Description	Effectiveness	Informant Excerpt
Relational Identity Frame	• Distance self from the stereotype • Attempt to change how people associate with view by allowing others to get to know • Consumption is not utilized as a management strategy, but can be used to facilitate other strategies	• Difficult strategy to implement • Lack of agency over the frame • Work alone rather than in a group • Success depends on others willingness and ability to get to know	"I make people like me. Ever since I was working at a factory and there were these two white women that didn't like me... They were sitting at this end [of the table] and I sat at that end. And they got up and moved to another table. And when they did, I got up and moved to the same table they did. And I said, 'Did I do something wrong? Did my deodorant fail?' They were like, 'No, no. What are you talking about?' 'Why did you move? You didn't have to move...' And I just started talk to them... and eventually we ended up laughing and talking. Then we were working buddies." (Roberta)

Table A.5 (cont.)

Strategy Type	Description	Effectiveness	Informant Excerpt
Enacted Identity Frame	• Distance self from the stereotype • Manipulate how communicate identity • Consumption used to communicate identity	• Less difficult to implement • Considerable agency over the frame • Strategy tends to be effective in distancing self from stereotype • Can be limited by amount of financial resources	"I have conversations all the time with women who want to go natural with their hair. And it is the same conversation that I have with women years ago about the fear of going natural, not just for the comfort of with how I look with natural hair, but concerns with being in a professional environment; whether or not they will be accepted in that environment, as intelligent, competent, professionals. And I understand that fear, because I had that same fear… When I first started here I had natural hair and I straightened it for my interview. And I did so because I was concerned." (Rowan)